



America



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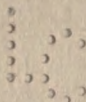


American Jewish Chronicle Series

Sholom Asch

AMERICA

Translated by James Fuchs

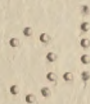


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“America” by Sholom Asch is the first of a number of books to be published by The American Jewish Chronicle, devoted to modern Jewish literature and art and to be known as the *American Jewish Chronicle Series*.

IN 1910, Sholom Asch paid a five months' visit to the United States. His observations on Ellis Island and his stay in New York supplied him with the double theme of "America,"—the injustice wrought upon the newcomers by a well meaning but ignorant and none too sympathetic officialdom on the Island and the inevitable divorcement, right after admission, between unreconstructed Jewish parents and Americanized Jewish children. He felt that there was need here for some one to do for the immigrant Jews what, in his own words, "Harriet Beecher Stowe did for the negroes in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'" Under this impulse, he wrote "America," which appeared at once in Warsaw. It was translated, immediately upon publication, into German, Polish and Russian.

Its Russian imprint in "The Neva," a monthly of widest circulation, happened to

Foreword

synchronize with the infamous Beilis persecution, and helped in creating a strong pro-Beilis sentiment. Important topical parts were translated into French and Italian. Everywhere it was hailed as a masterpiece.

The book belongs, in a sense, to the literature of social protest, but there is a lyrical passion about it, an epic, Dickens-like patience with the gropings and stumblings of ignorant souls, an intense, affectionate regard for poor, tongue-tied Jews, an imaginative understanding of image-ridden childhood, and, in passages, exquisitely suggestive hints of vast racial backgrounds and foregrounds that raise the work, considered purely as an artistic creation, to the level of a classic. May its present introduction to the globe's English-speaking nations contribute its share toward a better understanding of the author's race and a better knowledge of his gift of literary expression as typified in Sholom Asch.

A few words of biographical introduction will be welcomed by those newly-won friends of Mr. Asch, in whom his masterpiece has aroused a curiosity regarding his personalia:

Sholom Asch was born in Kutno, Russian

Foreword

Poland, in 1880. Up to the age of eighteen he received the traditional training for the rabbinate which represented the routine—ambition of his class and period. With secular enlightenment this ambition departed, and for the next three years the youth led the typical existence of a poor, self-sustaining student at the universities of Warsaw, Cracow, and Switzerland. His first book in Yiddish: "In a schlechter zeit," appeared in 1901. Its publication was furthered by Isaac Leib Peretz. There followed, in 1902, a collection of provincial Ghetto-sketches, known now to fame wherever Jews foregather, under the name "In Stettel." In 1905, his first drama, a Polish rendering of "As the Waters Flow," went over the stage in Cracow. "Auf'n Weg nach Zion," appeared [in Russian] in 1906. In 1907, Max Reinhardt produced in Berlin his "Gott von Nekume," which created an international sensation and secured rank and place for its author among the great dramatists of modern Europe. "America," now first made accessible to an English-reading public, was written in Warsaw, in 1910.

These dates are only the high-water-marks

Foreword

of our author's achievements. Numerous other works have come in an unceasing flow from his prolific pen. Each passing year brings new novels and plays by Asch. There are sometimes several offerings in a twelve-month. Of these multitudinous writings it may safely be predicted that the siftings of time will leave enough to assure a niche in the gallery of the world's enduring letters for the chronicler of the Western Passage of race.

America

CHAPTER I

MEIR, the teacher, turned homeward after nightfall, having taken belated leave from his nearest acquaintances at the House of Prayer. He went home to take his farewell supper with his own before his departure for America. In his dwelling room there was only his youngest to welcome him, six-year-old Jossele, who stood on a wooden stool at the covered table. Catching sight of his father the little fellow in his joy hammered the tablecloth with his spoon and exclaimed in a childish treble:

“Knowest thou, father, what mother is cooking tonight? White little beans, white little beans!”

The mother, Hannah Lea, protruded her head from behind the curtain that partitioned

off a diminutive kitchen from the dwelling-room. Over her prematurely withered face flickered a smile of quiet enjoyment, and her stealthy glance called attention to the child.

But the father said, with an affectation of severity in his voice: "Thou rogue, thou knowest mother's fare, but what portion of the Torah we are studying this week is unknown to thee!"

"Not so!" exclaimed the little one proudly.

"Let me hear then!" And the answer promptly came forth: "Go thou!" meaning the scriptural portion opening with these words. The father, with the same affected severity, shouted: "Well, get thee gone then, little scamp!" Whereupon Jossele, full of zeal: "What! did I tell it wrong?"

The mother busy with her cooking, her face turned toward Jossele, gazed at him fondly with that well-known smile of a mother that resembles weeping. Nothing was in such perfect keeping with her features as this very smile; for a permanent expression of grief on her face had furrowed it as with the traces of tears, so that every change in her lineaments looked like a new approach to weeping.

As she stood rejoicing over her child's for-

wardness, she forgot to mind her pot, which all of a sudden began to seethe and finally boiled over. That gave her a shock, and she vented her anger over the mishap upon the boy, chiding him as if he had been at fault.

“What an ado he makes about eating—would to God he showed as much zeal at his learning!”

That was not altogether just, for in the six years of his short life Jossele had eaten too little by far and learned too much. Even apart from that, his little life had been a thorny one. The most noticeable part of his diminutive body were two big, luminous eyes. The rest consisted of skin and bones, both showing the traces of a good many diseases. All the epidemics traversing the town made their first call upon Jossele and there took quarters. But he fought his way through them all—through typhoid, measles and scarlatina, and now in his sixth year he was a tiny but notable personality, able to read, well-versed in prayer and capable, of course, of making a good deal of noise with his spoon.

The father took Jossele by the hand, looked at his face with a smile that lost itself in his long beard and asked:

"Knowest thou, Jossele, where I am going to?"

"To America," answered the child.

"And where lieth America?" inquired the father.

"Far, far off"—and Jossele made a sweeping gesture with his tiny hand, to indicate vast distance.

The father curled his locks, stroked his little face and poised the child's new hat (a gift for the holidays) about his ears. All through his father's absence Jossele remembered these evidences of affection.

Suddenly the door was pushed open with a great deal of noise, and two little boys about eight years of age, looking like twins in the sameness of their long frocks, tumbled merrily into the room, but hushed up at once catching sight of their father.

"Aha, there is the 'band'," saluted the mother from behind the stove. The "bandits" took their seats at the table, in the voicelessness of good behavior.

"Why so early tonight?" demanded the father. Both replied *a tempo*, "Teacher dismissed us at an early hour to give us a chance of leavetaking." A momentary stillness en-

sued, broken a minute later by Jossele who shouted gleefully, in right of his position as the youngest and the assured pet of the family: "Father fares to America, father fares to America!" "A matter for rejoicing!" grumbled the mother and put the soup terrine upon the table. And then, turning upon her husband:

"Meir, wash your hands, supper is served!"

"And won't you wait for little Rachel?"

"I cannot think what it is that keeps her so long!"

"Most likely she can't bring uncle to terms—a hardship, this, to deal with such a dun-derhead!" groaned Meir, plowing his beard with heavy strokes in token of his commiseration with the child.

His wife stood for a moment motionless, soup-ladle in hand, in her surprise at these accents of softness in the voice of a father known to her as sparing of gentle words in his dealings with the children.

Uncle Chaim was Meir's younger brother. He had married below him—and it was a divorced woman whom he had taken unto himself. By way of compensation he was now the owner of several thousand roubles. For a

long time Meir kept aloof from his brother. But when his little shop of odds and ends failed to keep him, and maintenance of his family became impracticable without fraternal subsidies, he had to turn, willy-nilly, to his "rich" brother for help. The doles he secured did not go a long way. And thus it came to pass in the end, that Meir whose entire world had heretofore been confined to his townlet and almost exclusively to the way to the synagogue therein, resolved to emigrate to America, without visible means of support, like so many others before him, among them several of his relatives. To this end he appealed to his "rich" brother to lend him the twenty-five roubles he lacked of the price of a steamer-ticket. When he failed in his appeal he sent his eldest, little Rachel, to the uncle, by way of last resort. The girl, despite her ten years, was of an eloquence renowned throughout the street and more than once had seconded her father successfully in similar emergencies. Seeing Meir come home empty-handed that day, she took the shawl that served her both as cloak and headgear and run off, vowing, with the solemnity of childhood, that she

would not return home without the uncle's grant of twenty-five roubles.

In the meantime, Meir was loath to sit down at table; he paced the room, tugged his beard, jerked his head nervously to the right and left as if to shake off somber thoughts. Finally he turned to the boys:

"Berel, Chaim, you must mind your mother, do you hear me? Obey your mother and study the law with all diligence, for in my absence, who will . . ."

He was about to wind up gently, in keeping with his true character; because the thought of his far journey and of his eldest pleading hard at this moment with a close-fisted uncle for a loan of twenty-five measly roubles, considerably softened him. But when he noticed Berel sitting with one leg under his seat and the other twisted backward, he shouted angrily:

"Only look how that scamp is sitting—down with that leg, thou——"

"To be sure, they will mind me—of course they will! They'll wreck and ruin me," his wife flared up. "With whom art thou leaving me!" she wailed.

At this domestic turn the door opened and

in came *Muhme* (aunt) Sheindel, wrapped in a big shawl. The hectic spots flaming upon her bony cheeks testified to some disorder of her lungs. Alluding to this hectic redness the town had given her the surname of "Red-cheeks." She entered with an expression on her face as if come to mourn a death. Without bidding "good evening" to those within the room, she elevated her shoulders, coughed, and cast furtive glances all around, as if addressing her inquiry to the walls:

"Hasn't Rachel come back yet?" (The whole town was privy to Rachel's mission and the tale of the twenty-five roubles.) Without waiting for an answer she asked another question: "Haven't you had your supper?" and a third in rapid sequence: "Wasn't Leibush here?" To this last question her brother Meir paid better heed than to the others. Leibush, her husband, was his brother-in-law. He was habitually cross with him, though they prayed in the same synagogue and journeyed to the same wonder-working rabbi. This, because Leibush conceived of himself and his kin as of a patrician caste and claimed that his father-in-law defrauded him of part of the stipulated dowry due him, and of some years

of free maintenance agreed upon in the marriage-bond as well. And though this was ancient scandal—for his father-in-law had been dead and in his grave these eighteen years—he was still wont to air his grievances against his wife and her family. In his outward bearing he was cold of temper and short of speech. For all that, he was deeply moved by all that concerned the family, and the first on the spot both on joyful occasions and—which God forbend!—sorrowful ones. And therefore, as Sheindel hinted, he meant to come and take his leave, though at their daily meetings Meir and he spoke never a word to each other.

It didn't take long before the door was opened in haste and Rachel entered, altogether out of breath. Her curls below her shawl were in disarray, but her hand was firmly closed around a crumpled bill. With triumphant mien she yelled at her father:

“He just had to give it!”

They all pounced upon her to feast their eyes upon the bill, soiled and crumpled though it was. The father took it into his keeping, and plainly showing his relief of mind, stroked the girl's head. That was some-

thing altogether out of the common with this austere parent, and so surprising to little Rachel that she reddened all over as if ashamed. Forthwith her mother took her into a corner and there they held a whispered confab. The *Muhme* shook her upper frame as if bereft of reason, until the father spoke up:

"And the aunt, what had she to say, eh?" he began; his relaxation from inward stress vented itself in this: he lifted Jossele upon his arm and gave him a gentle spanking. The boy relished the pleasantries well enough, looking steadfastly into his father's eyes as if to reassure himself that all was well.

"I had nothing whatever to say to aunt. I laid for uncle at his door, where he stood talking to some people, and there I shouted my errand within everybody's hearing. Oh! I wouldn't be such a fool as to parley with aunt!" she concluded, exhibiting a child's pride in the diplomacies of the full-grown.

All rejoiced over her prudence, and her mother conferred distinction upon her by saying:

"Serve supper, Rachel!"

The father, oblivious, for the time being, of his impending journey, proud of his clever

offspring, and rejoicing over the twenty-five roubles within his grasp, ordered the boys to wash hands and went with them to perform his own ablutions.

All seated themselves around the table. *Muhme* Sheindel was the first to recall the journey. It was habitual with her to speak by preference of sorrowful and somber subjects, of death and the devil's wiles. The children were mightily afraid of her. She was fond of cemetery walks, and wrapped in her big shawl, with the red spots in her face, she truly reminded people of the stalking of malignant death. Quoth she: "Why, Meir, art thou not afraid of the big water? I understand, from common report, that people falling ill upon the high seas are strapped upon a board and thrown into the water."

She told her tale with a queer smile hovering around her thin lips in ghostly fashion. Her eyes turned green and narrowed down to needlepoints. Having done with her terrors, she coughed and tittered weirdly: Hi, hi, hi.

Through the momentary stillness that ensued only the clattering of the spoons plied by the "bandits" was audible.

When the *Muhme* came to an end with her

coughing, she resumed: "Who knows but what they did the like to my David? Three years gone, and never a word of him!"

"Untrue!" retorted Hannah Lea. "Why, Enoch the tailor saw him in London! He is a capmaker and fond of card games."

The Muhme smiled her ghastly smile.

"To forget each other is a failing common in your family. When a son departs from out of your midst, he drops out of ken—did you ever hear the like?" Hannah added.

Again the elfin tittering of the Muhme was heard, and between whiles her cough, terrifying the children.

And then it happened that Hannah Lea, without manifest occasion, while lifting the first spoonful to her mouth, broke into heart-rending sobs: "Ach, Meir, with whom art thou leaving me? Wither goest thou? . . . Still sobbing, she covered her eyes with her apron.

Thereupon Rachel laid down her spoon and seconded her mother's hysterics. The father stared into vacuity and tugged his beard. Only "the band" paid no heed. As if to the routine accompaniment of their tears, they laddled their soup with a new access of speed.

After her success in creating gloom, the Muhme took to soothing: "Never mind, not all fall ill upon the seas, nor are all strapped to a board." But Hannah Lea remained inconsolable. All the mischances and evil fortunes of her life—and there had been not a few—seemed to liquefy now in tears.

Upon this scene of little comfort the door opened once more and an oppressed, gloomy "good evening" salute was heard. A lanky man of dark looks, poorly clad and on the shady side of forty, entered the room and seated himself in a corner.

"Art thou come, Leibush?" "Yes, it is I," came a grumbling response from out of the corner. These accents of moroseness were habitual with the man only in his intercourse with his wife and children. He was at bottom a kindly soul, never speaking ill of anyone and never raising his voice. And such as he was, he was throughout his life in hard luck—nothing prospered at his hands. He lacked the stamina for long sustained bargaining and consequently got the short end in almost every deal. But with his own he could not talk otherwise save in grudging and morose accents. Though he loved them profoundly,

he never had a good word for them. To talk gently to his wife would have seemed to him a sort of levity—a fall to the level of a loving suitor. All were not a little surprised therefore when he turned to Hannah Lea with comfort in his voice. What did she weep for, then? An endless number of people cross daily and they all arrive in port safe and sound. With God's help he too will safely land. Legions of people are bound the same road—no cause for weeping.

To these rare advances of his brother-in-law, Meir, in his softened mood, responded in a tone unheard of in their previous intercourse. He made friends, as it were, with Leibush by making light of woman's weakness.

"A woman—therefore she cries. Thou knowest tears are the comfort of women"—but bending a little over his brother-in-law, he added in a whisper: "It's not to be wondered at, after all—such a far country!"

"To be sure, to be sure," responded Leibush with a compassionate headshake.

"Perchance he may meet our David?" exclaimed the *Muhme* to her husband across the room.

"Our David? Whom else? the red cobbler

belike—who has surely come to a bad end long ago,” snapped Leibush, with a change for the worse in his voice.

Meir rose and pronounced the benediction (with Leibush piously swaying the upper part of his body). He sighed several times during the prescribed rite, and therein also was seconded and abetted by his kinsman.

After rising from the table, Meir approached his brother-in-law and said with quiet solemnity as if rendering an account to him: “It is my sacred duty, I can do no otherwise. Perchance the Uppermost has destined me to wander into exile. If this be decreed, the burden will be mine. If only wife and children (he pointed to them) have their daily bread. I can do no other, Leibush. I’ll turn a plain workingman. There is no other way. I could not venture upon it at home, on account of the disgrace.”

CHAPTER II

“**A**ND how about Jewish ways?” his brother-in-law reminded him, heaving a sigh of apprehension.

“God will help—whosoever *wills* to be a Jew, may be one, I think, in any part of the world—if only one firmly *wills* it.” “Just so,” affirmed Leibush. “Also, thou knowest, what the rabbi said?” To be sure, I have heard him in his *stub*, God permitting.” “What more could we do in the matter?”

While Meir and Leibush thus had speech together, the two women, for years on terms the reverse of friendly, drew near to each other in a corner and there sat in most intimate consultation. Hannah Lea mentioned a “conditional” bill of divorce given by husbands going on far-off journeys by land and sea, which someone had told her was a customary expedient in such cases. Her husband meant to give her such a bill of divorce, but Hannah Lea would have none of it—would not even

think of it. Sheindel approved of this, but told a story of evil portents, hinting at the need of precaution—inasmuch as strange things befell men in the New World. Strange women are crossing their paths, aye. . . . Hannah Lea felt as if stabbed through the heart. . . . Little Rachel sat with the women folk and took part in the conversation like a grown-up. Left to themselves, the “band” spoke evil things of the “green-eyed *Muhme*,” as they called their aunt. They discovered in her eyes little spectres such as rise to the surface of the waters, and Berel, the younger of the two, who was well versed in such matters, told of all manner of wizards and witches hiding under the fringes of *Muhme* Sheindel’s head-covering, and creeping into her eyes. Berel pointed to the eyes of the *Muhme*, which in truth were turning green as she told Hannah Lea detestable details of the seductive arts of women in America—in this green sea Berel plainly saw whole legions of imps disporting themselves, and as they bobbed up and down, they recalled to Berel’s mind the picture of a sinking ship, which made him tell of the vast ocean, of ships, dolphins and sea-monsters, as if he had beheld these wonders with his own eyes. Jossele sat right next

to him, his luminous eyes wide open, breathlessly listening to every word and seeing mental pictures of all the marvels spoken of, until he began to sob in sheer terror of the sea, of his aunt, of everything. Nobody paid heed to his weeping, the talk went on and veered about, until the little fellow fell asleep on father's traveling bag in a corner of the room, oppressed, no doubt, by nightmares of sinking ships, sea-monsters, apparitions and the "green-eyed-*Muhme*." A little later the "band" followed suit, lying peacefully asleep upon a second traveling bag, with legs sprawling all over the floor.

A night of inky blackness settled over the town. It was pitch-dark in Meir's room as he stood before the bed of his two elder boys, softly murmuring something into his long beard. Meir lighted a little wick. With closed eyes and searching hands he groped for the heads of the "bandits." They were lying perfectly still and in the faint illumination of the wick didn't look at all like bandits, but rather like two slender twigs or like two tiny young calves, their heads close together, a picture of guileless innocence. Their father settled their caps that had been sliding off upon their heads

and as he rested his hand upon their foreheads, he whispered something, without opening his eyes. He then turned to Jossele, who—despite his scholarship and mature ways—still slept with his mother. He looked at him broodingly, sighed deeply, and then—wonder of wonders!—pressed a kiss upon his forehead.

He had been told that Jossele was asleep. But when Hannah Lea, who stood at his side, bent down with the wick to show him Jossele's face, they became aware that the dark eyes of the child were wide open, staring intently into the surrounding gloom. Meir spoke up:

"Thy father, Jossele, is going on a far journey."

Jossele kept silent, but his eyes showed that he was listening with all his might.

"There will be no one to question and to examine thee. Learn diligently, pray piously, do not stray away from home, and obey thy mother in all things—in thy father's absence," said Meir.

Jossele continued to keep his peace, but enlightenment had come to him in the twinkling of an eyelash. He understood what was doing now and keenly felt his impending orphanage. As his father bent down to give

him a parting kiss he lisped: "A good journey and fare thee well, father"—which was meant and understood to be his pledge to be mindful of his father's exhortations.

All this was so strange and out of keeping with the unemotional routine of their lives, that Hannah Lea sobbed aloud. But Meir leaned again over the child, kissed it once more and again whispered something with his eyes closed. Then, shouldering his two traveling bags, he departed hence, accompanied by his wife and little Rachel.

When the cart began to move, Hannah Lea, unable to restrain herself, renewed her weeping. Mindful of *Muhme* Sheindel's tales she called after her husband:

"Meir, do not forget thy wife and children left behind thee!" No sooner had she made outcry after this fashion, she repented of her words in shame and grief and would have gladly recalled them—too late.

As Jossele raised his eyes, he saw the "band" crouching on the floor between chairs and benches turned upside down. "Today," they proclaimed, "there won't be any school—father went to America."

But Jossele returned no answer. Deep down

in his heart he treasured his parent's words at parting; every word that had issued from the mouth of Meir filled him with pride and his mind was fully made up to abide by his father's commandments.

CHAPTER III

LIKE an outcast of the desert sat Meir in his corner on the third floor of a jerry-built house in Essex Street, New York City—a negligible item in a population of five million town-dwellers and of 900,000 of his brethren in Israel. He had joined no club, he belonged to no society, he denied himself to the crowds about him. His fellow-townsmen of Third Street, whose address he had carried on ship-board, received the newly landed and procured him a “Jewish job,” that is to say, a berth in a factory closed on Sabbath days.

It is now seven months since Meir first cowered in his corner at a shop-window facing a huge dead wall. And there he sits all day long, hemstitching shirts on a machine. He scarcely knows how he drifted into this, although he rides to and from his place of employment with mechanical regularity every work-day. One of his compatriots, a kinsman of his *Muhme Malkah*, had steered him somewhere safely into

a deep "cellar," where he took a train, and in this wise he journeyed daily to the factory and back. He marveled not at this train thundering through a terrifying subterranean tunnel; he had seen so many things on his way to America and his brains were befogged through such a swift succession of prodigious novelties that the faculty of astonishment was dead within him. It did not rouse him out of his stupor when his kinsman offered him a job at shirt-making—a place in front of a sewing-machine. He, Meir, Reb Jossele's son, whose name was one of note throughout his native town as that of a scholar, he, a disciple of the Gerer Rabbi and a merchant (after a fashion) by social caste, he was now to stitch shirts, on a level, say, with Sender, the ladies' tailor, of his native town. But then—everything is possible here—that's why it is America! After all, manual work is accounted no disgrace in these parts, which was the very reason of his coming. Main thing was to earn a living for wife and children waiting for the first rouble at home. Wherefore he got quickly used to his servitude—he bowed his head in submission, saying: this then shall be my trade! And thus he sat all day long, with covered head—(the others

worked bareheaded)—in the same shop with the seamstresses. He did not mind them; he worked diligently and without interruption. Not a word did he speak to anyone. But as he worked he turned a great many things over in his mind, recapitulating sometimes entire chapters of the Mishna or the Scriptures, but mostly thinking of his family across the water. What were the children doing? And Jossele? Jossele—he almost saw him in the flesh sitting in the teacher's narrow room and translating the opening verses of Genesis. Ah, he has a subtle little head, he is quick of comprehension, an assiduous pupil and regular in his evening devotions at the House of Prayer. A good child, he thought, and his heart overflowed with yearning after his youngest.

When at last he was enabled to mail Hannah Lea the first ten roubles (in American currency only five insignificant dollars), he could scarcely contain himself in his joy; in the spirit he sat at home with his youngest, saw the letter-carrier entering the room, heard his brother-in-law reading his letter to Hannah Lea—a virtuous woman forsooth, and one cumbered with many burdens!—there she stands now, with Jossele at her side, tugging at her

apron; "Let me look at father's letter!" . . .

To his Judaism he adhered with all his heart, not departing a hair's breadth from his native usage. He rose before dawn of day to study a chapter of the Talmud before morning-prayers, as was his wont since childhood. (His Talmud folios, as a matter of course, he had brought with him across the seas.) At first his room-mate, a young man, objected to this nocturnal disturbance, but he got used to it in time, and Meir did what he could to efface himself: he stuck to his corner in the room where his bed and little locker stood, and this was now his entire home. In this narrow corner he studied, prayed, meditated, before going to work. In this corner he lighted the two Sabbath candles on Fridays, and took leave of the Sabbath on the day following. Whatever happened about and around him did not touch him—he willed to see nothing. Once on Friday night as he welcomed the Sabbath, his room-mate was busy with some tinkering task of his trade. At other times he would sit down on Friday evening with a friend brought to the room and play a game of cards. Meir never thought of arguing the matter with him—he knew that remonstrance would be of no avail.

Nor would it do to look for another room—he would be sure to find the same state of affairs elsewhere. He simply didn't look and refused to see whatever befell—in *his* corner it was holy Sabbath.

He did not mingle in prayerful communion with his fellows in any congregation. On the first Friday evening after his landing, his fellow-townsmen had brought him to the "Congregation of the Men of Leshna," which consisted of compatriots only. The conventicle had its headquarters in Essex Street, near where he lived. On his way to the House of Prayer he saw the street swarming with people as if it were the exit and not the advent of Sabbath. The larger thoroughfares were thronged with people crowding around pushcarts and hucksters' stalls, so as to make passage difficult. There were Jewish factory-hands listening to shrill venders praising their goods, women, both young and old, and entire hordes of children playing ball or making bonfires of a litter of wood and paper wastage, with no one to tell them that Sabbath had already come. To the very door of the prayer-room did the traffic of work-a-days pursue him, nay, even on the stairs leading thereto sat

Jewish women obtruding all manner of peddler's ware upon the congregants coming to prayer. It was a hasty retreat he had to beat from market and pavement into the prayer-hall. But there, too, the Sabbath of the "Men of Leshna" was a poor and spiritless affair, such as would have been held in scorn at home even by the ill-reputed tailors. Meir cast a glance around the hall. One member dragged from out of a corner a prayer-desk, which he put into the middle of the room. Another was in a belated bustle with the lighting of the candles, though Sabbath had come long ago. Slowly, one by one, the members of the congregation made their arrival—most of them known to and remembered by Meir as erstwhile petty mechanics from his town. Some of them he hadn't seen since childhood and they looked to him like the weird specters peopling an incoherent dream of long-ago. The chairman was a former clothesmender—"goat" they used to call him—a man with a reddish fringe of hair to his chin. Within Meir's recollection, he had once been sent to Berditchev and disappeared. In New York, however, he was chairman of a congregation, a man of eminence, who shook hands with Meir, with a con-

descension bordering on pity. Meir looked about him in the hall, seeking for someone of his own standing to talk to. But he saw only the faces of mechanics, none of his own respectable rearing. They received him cordially enough and asked for news from the old home, until one from out of their midst stepped to the prayer-desk and began to recite. He who officiated had been at home a blacksmith of little esteem.

Meir thought of the Sabbath at home. All shops are closed, all earthly concerns in town, as it were, locked up. He thought of Reb Isak, the cantor, of the pious, heart-gripping intonation of his chant, and a wistful longing filled him suddenly for wife and child and the domestic Sabbath. Jossele, his goodly lad, stands now in his new long frock, his father's last New Year's gift (Meir in his visions of home, always saw Jossele in his new frock), devoutly intoning the liturgy, prayer-book in hand. In his room the table is covered with clean linen, the candles are burning, and Hannah Lea—excellent goodwife!—has donned her new cap . . . and he, on remote highroads, removed from them by an immensity of space . . . but he did not permit his heartache to

rise within him, for it was Sabbath, and he joined with fervor in the jubilating Song of Welcome, 'spite uncongenial surroundings.

After the service he sat down in a corner to read a little in the Scriptures, as had been his custom at home, so as not to leave the House of God in unseemly haste. Besides, what manner of home had he to hasten to? Even as it was, he felt the peace of Sabbath within him. But no sooner had he bent over his book, he noticed, that the prayer-desk was hurriedly dragged into the corner whence it had emerged, and he saw a new set of people entering at the door—this time a crowd manifestly in a hurry. And while desk and law-scrolls were covered in a corner with white linen, musicians took their stand in the middle of the room and around them, in groups, young people. Meir was beside himself with amazement, but the man who had lit the candles now approached him and said, in Galician dialect:

“Friend, you must go hence now, they are already bringing in the tables . . . and the dancing-master will presently arrive. . . .”

“What—in the sanctuary—on the Sabbath?” cried Meir, horrified.

“Yes—the hall is let to the ‘Men of Leshna’ only from six till eight. At eight the dancing-master arrives.”

“What—in the sanctuary?” repeated Meir.

“It ceases to be a sanctuary at the stroke of eight—it’s now a dance-hall. . . .”

Meir grasped his prayer-book and ran. He did not concern himself thereafter with congregations—he welcomed the Sabbath in his forlorn corner, he chanted the tunes of Reb Isak, longed for the Judaism of his native soil, for wife and children, and above all, Jossele.

CHAPTER IV

FOR Jossele his affectionate yearning was boundless. He had been an undemonstrative father at home, but that did not restrain his transports of hot affection now that his children were out of his sight. Whenever the children were ill at home, he used to watch entire nights at their beds and to pawn his very garments to pay apothecary and physician—all speechless and as a matter of paternal duty. But now, in a remote part of the world, an irresistible wave of family-affection surged up within him—especially of affection for little Jossele. He had an irrepressible craving to talk of Jossele to someone—to tell of the child's many virtues, of his prodigious mental endowments, his early sagacity—alas! how many sage and droll sayings heretofore unheeded did he remember now!—and it was this craving that sometimes drove him into the company of his fellow-townsmen in Third Street.

The compatriots of Third Street usually met at the apartment of Reb Cohen's widow, who lived there with her seven sons and three daughters. Reb Cohen had been one of the most prominent citizens of the townlet. Well-nigh half of its denizens were somehow of his kindred. His father and grandfather had peopled the town with a numerous offspring, and Leshna consequently swarmed with close and distant relatives of the Cohens.

After Reb Cohen's death, the children, one by one, ventured forth into the wide world. The first to go was a younger son, a craftsman of parts, and he drew the entire family after him, until they all reunited in America—including Reb Cohen's aged widow. And ever since the apartment of the widow Cohen had been the "address" of all bound from Leshna to America. In time, half the town came successively across the seas to the "*Muhme*." The "*Muhme*" received frequent telegrams from ship-board advising her of the arrival of some Leshner, and forthwith a young man was deputed to call for the newcomer at the landing-pier and to bring him to the house of the "*Muhme*," where the "*greener*" stayed for a few days until a job could be procured for him.

Every Sabbath night the Leshner foregathered at the *Muhme* and there discussed the old home, and whenever there was a new arrival from Leshna, greetings and news were received and old memories of home freely aired.

The large parlor of the Cohen's is never empty. The unmarried sons live with the mother, and the entire family lives within bonds of a most cordial union. Hannah, the widow, knows from experience (so she says), what it means to take refuge with "Columbus." She has gone herself—if you are to listen to her—through the trials of the transplanted, though her sons protest they don't know what it is that mother lost through change of soil. Why, her only diversion at home was to look at the town-pump and here in America she goes to the theatre. For all that, the good woman was "sore on Columbus." Whenever one of the sons did not bring his pay-envelope home intact, she dragged "Columbus" straightway out of his grave. More than once she had threatened to go home, though she had no one in Leshna to turn to—her entire family had already gathered about her in America. More than once did her children find her in broad daylight with tearful eyes, her hands folded

and a murmur upon her lips: "I want to go home." On one occasion matters with her took such a critical turn that they had to buy a steamer-ticket for her voyage home. In the last minute before sailing, embracing with her glance the children and grandchildren to be left behind, she cried: "To whom am I journeying, with 'Columbus' in possession of all my kin." And to the tune of "last bell, all ashore that's goin' ashore" she grabbed her bundle and returned to Third Street.

Young folk came to the *Muhme* in flocks. Together with the sons of the widow Hannah they formed the leading element of the "Young Poople's Leschner Society" and on Saturday evenings especially they cultivated the parlor-politics of their clan. The elder menfolks had their "Congregation," but the women came to Hannah without any collective pretext—they simply came to enjoy the Old World talk, in the foreknowledge that they would find there the new arrivals from home.

One Sabbath, after "seeing out" the day of rest, Meir went to her rooms, casually drifting there in the depression of his spirits. Eight months had passed now since his departure from home, and his mode of life, without wife

and children, began to be an intolerable burden to him. His misery fed upon the memory of many lonesome Sabbaths, the Passover-feast spent in mournful isolation, and with a heart-pang he thought of his children who had to celebrate it in a fatherless home. From the moment of his arrival he kept the prospect of permanently establishing himself in some independent trade before his mind. Notwithstanding his regular remittances to Hannah Lea and the cost of his own subsistence, he managed, by a marvel of thrift, to lay aside a trifle each week for a future foothold in "business." But to what end? He plainly perceived that he had either to go back to his wife and children or else have them join him. His slender hoard of savings would neither pay his way home nor their passage westward. Also, there was a great deal of talk among the factory hands about industrial crises, their unforeseen approach, and the distress they brought to the homes of workers. Many of his shop-mates belonged to organizations paying insurance-moneys to the unemployed in times of critical depression. His kinsman of Third Street had urged him to join the "Solidarity," an organization founded and

controlled by the workers themselves. He resented, however, his relatives' implied concept of him as of a mechanic among mechanics. It was a slight upon one of the respectability and a scholar of parts. But he didn't think of this on his way to Third Street. What if he were to go home? To what purpose? To relapse into his old-time destitution? What prospects had he in Leshna? If only he could make shift to have them join him—after all, he was earning money and had to provide for two households as it was. (Meir reckoned himself as one household.) Even under this handicap he managed to lay something aside every week. Surely, if re-united with his own, he would make both ends meet—seeing that Rachel, his eldest, as he had been told, would be able before long to join the ranks of wage-earners. But how was he to raise the passage money? And having safely brought his family hither, how about the Judaism of his children and their religious instruction? As for the “band,” he did not credit them with much; clearly, they were not the raw material out of which great scholars are fashioned. But Jossele!—And as he thought of Jossele, a new wave of hot paternal pity surged up within

him. He saw him in his mind's eye, an eager scripture-reader on Saturday afternoons, a gifted beginner already knowing several chapters of Genesis by heart, a neglected pupil looking about him for some one to overhear his lessons. He saw the little fellow turning to his mother for an examination in the Scriptures and pouring out his learning in vain before an ignorant and helpless woman.

Filled with such thoughts Meir arrived in Third Street. In the hallway of *Muhme* Hannah's house he stumbled over a wagon-park of baby-carriages warning the newcomer of a swarm of visiting womanhood abovestairs. The large parlor was crowded with men, women, young folk, children, infants—one sat wherever there was sitting room; on bedsteads, table-edges, even on the floor. The women carried their babies in arms and the children played hide-and-seek under the table. The air of the room was thick with cigarette-fumes. But the dominating personage sitting at the table was, for the time being, one Joel Wattmacher, a fresh arrival from Leshna. The entire clan, both old folks and young, pressed near him for the sake of recent news from home.

"And how fares old Chaja?" one of the crowd inquired. "Is she still among the living?" Chaja being the "oldest inhabitant" and well-known to all of them.

"Poor soul—she died of a fall! Slipped and fell down the cellar stairs last New Year, and died of her injuries."

"Died!" All shook their heads, as if the death of a nonagenarian were matter of pitying wonder. "Well, anyhow, she lived to a green old age." And *in memoriam* they told, as townfolk are wont to tell, a great many little traits of the dead and petty incidents of her life.

"Remember," someone recalled, "what an excellent story-teller she used to be at fat-straining?" "And what a fine cook she was—the taste of her dumplings abides with me to this day." Another voice from the background: "She baked my wedding-cake—as a skilled confectioner she had no peer in town!" Recollections of the peerless one were aired until the desultory curiosity of the crowd turned once more to inquiries after the living. So urgently beset was Wattmacher by a multitude of inquiries and so many questions had they to ask, that Meir, consumed with anxiety

about his own family, had to wait a long time for his chance to get near him. Everyone in the room had questions to ask, not only about those next of kin, but about friends and casual acquaintances as well, and there were those whose home-sickness manifested itself in anxious inquiries after certain streets and houses of Leshna—the very stones of their native town were embraced within their sympathies. An elderly man, hazily remembered by Meir, with a heavy gold-chain across his portly expanse of stomach (an “allright-nick” they called him) had something to ask about the date for a *Jahrzeit*. He wanted to time a projected visit to Leshna so as to reach home that day. He made a great ado demanding the latest news of a number of girls he had courted in the long-ago and left behind him, speaking of them in a tone as if they were still young girls. Wattmacher had noticed that they all addressed themselves to the “allright-nick” with a certain respect, which made him answer his questions promptly and with great minuteness of detail. It appeared, that all the “young girls” so tenderly remembered were ancient matrons by this time, with married children and grand-

children. At this the "allright-nick" pulled faces as if hearing something quite irregular and supernatural. But presently he began to relate himself how these very ex-loves of his were sending him their grown-up sons across the water and how he tipped them ten-dollar-notes for every kiss received from their mothers in the auld-lang-syne. Those within earshot laughed aloud, but Meir, abashed, withdrew into a corner. To keep the merri-ment agoing, the "allright-nick" sent for beer. As the drink went round, a multitude of ancient stories were recalled—matters of common report in the Leshna of several decades ago—names were bandied about whose bearers had been sleeping below the sod these many years—gone streets and razed houses, both out of ken of the present generation, rose from the ground in the memory of the old. That was the opportunity of Mosheh the Kossak, already known in the Leshna days as a wag and a jester, and somewhat of an actor to boot. In America he made a living as a barber but was understood to be in close touch with the stage. This Mosheh Kossak now planted himself broadly in the middle of the room, and for the delectation of the older

Leshners, began to imitate the quacking incantations of "Picknick" the cantor, the dancing of Chaja Rebecka at wedding-feasts, the "cholera" fits of Lea Genendel after her superabundant Sabbath-dinners, spells of illness ministered to by Itshel the surgeon's apprentice with his smelling bottle—items of ancient gossip unfamiliar to all but the oldest Leshners in the room.

Mosheh Kossak's theatricals gave Meir his chance to approach Wattmacher and to ask the news of wife and child.

Joel turned to him with a start and recognized Meir.

"Ah, it's you, is it? Well, peace to you! Your little one—what's his name now?—Jossele—why, the whole town knows his scholarly repute by this time! He ran after me at parting, entreating me to give you his love—to tell you that he is studying with a will and looking forward to the time when you will put his learning to the test. By the way: he gave me a note for you (Wattmacher fumbled in all his pockets), aye, he bade me tell you that he is now learning how to write, and he sends you a note all in his own hand (Joel found the crumpled leaf and handed it

to Meir), he begged so earnestly that I couldn't refuse."

Meir withdrew into a corner and smoothed the crumpled paper. It was a leaf torn from a writing book bearing this legend, in a child's hand, on its ruled page:

"I want to see my little father," "I want to see my little father," and so on in pathetic repetition, all the way down to the bottom line of the page.

Meir looked long at the paper, reading and re-reading line by line. For a while he sat wrapt in contemplation, note in hand. At last, with the expression of a well-meditated resolve in his face, he turned to Chaja's oldest, a conscious American who spoke a fluent English and liked himself in the role of instructor to the "green" and inexperienced. Meir questioned him cautiously:

"They say, that steamer-tickets may be had on the instalment plan—is this a true report?"

"What, do you mean to bring over your family?"

"I don't know," replied Meir in an uncertain tone of voice. "What say you?"

CHAPTER V

HANNAH LEA wrapped herself into her new Sabbath-shawl, took Jossele by the hand, and led him to the assistant of the rabbi, who studied Sacred Writ with the "Friends of Truth" every Saturday afternoon. She sent Jossele, book in arm, indoors, with the request to have the fatherless boy examined in his studies. To her brother-in-law, or any other kinsman, she would not have him go on such an errand, lest "her enemies rejoice over her misfortune." Though the brother-in-law and his wife had taken amicable leave of Meir at parting, yet Hannah Lea included them among her enemies. That Jossele had to be examined by others, in the absence of his father, was to Hannah Lea a "misfortune for the rejoicing of the ill-wishing."

She didn't know how to keep the "band" under restraint. Her two elder boys went to school or played truants as they listed, though strangers on the street would oftentimes ex-

hort them in neighborly concern for the fatherless. More than once they were halted on the street and shouted at: "Get ye gone to school, you little scamps!" For all this volunteer supervision on the part of neighbors they managed to have their own idle way, most of the time. The entire town knew of their vagrancy and pitied Hannah Lea: "Alas, without a father, children are bound to go the wrong road!"

Between Hannah Lea and the "band" there existed a permanent state of war. She locked up bread and boots in the closet, but the boys always found a way to get at both. Hannah Lea, like her neighbors, gave them up for lost, but when they came home complaining that they had been chased out of father's accustomed corner in the House of Prayer, she flared up and raised a cry that her poor orphans had been ejected—and that God would have pity upon them

Not so with Jossele. Hannah Lea considered his tutelage her most sacred duty to Meir. The child showed great eagerness to learn; therein he was to be encouraged, as a matter of course, in every way possible. And though neighbor Mosheh examined him every Sabbath, she

took him to the rabbi's assistant for an additional coaching and quizzing in the afternoon, to show the town that she knew what became a mother—that Meir was safe in trusting her with his treasure.

But then, Jossele was a different sort altogether. Unlike his brethren, he felt his state of semi-orphanage as something that classed him with full-grown people. He had ripened over night—in that night when his father leaned over his pillow and took leave of him. It dawned upon him then that an important family-event had happened. He did not tease his mother with questions about father's return—he understood that his parent had gone to far-off parts because he had to. Also, that he had to take care of himself from this on unaided. And as if quite clear about his destiny, the little man withdrew within himself. No one had to bid *him* go to school. He rose in the morning without any one to awaken him, and eagerly went on his way to school. Playmates he had none—no one ever saw him at play. In school he sat gravely listening to whatever his teacher said, with the singlemindedness of a true budding scholar. On the way home he did not romp nor did he

engage in outdoor games with his schoolmates. At home he took his seat near his elders and listened to adult conversation with the earnestness of a compeer. Such as he was, everyone was pleased with him and all were full of his praises.

On Friday evening he took his father's prayer-book and went to the house of worship there to join loudly and zealously in the service, within everybody's hearing. The men stroked his cheeks, and Jossele, flattered, was inwardly rejoiced, but hid his elation with a self-restraint beyond his years. With his brothers he held no communion, but when mother angrily denounced them for a couple of never-do-wells, he sat glooming in a corner as if worried about their future.

He himself urged Hannah Lea every Saturday afternoon to escort him to the place of examination. Today, facing an audience of men, he recites with a resonant voice the week's chapter and the commentaries thereon, just as he was taught them, with the self-consciousness of a grown-up, as if to give his hearers to understand: In the absence of father, I have to fend for myself! His mother stands at the door (to avoid the unseemliness

of joining an exclusively male assemblage) and at the sound of his childish voice turns to the women who pass, with a sigh that masks her exultation: "This is my Jossele, whom I have to bring hither to be examined, in the absence of his father."

"At the end of Jossele's turn the assistant caresses his cheeks. But the little man takes his book under his arm, quietly says: "Good Sabbath" and leaves the house with the sedateness of a major, to go home with his mother. The women are sitting in front of their doors, and Hannah Lea, making halt before each group, enters into conversation: "Good Sabbath!" "Same to you." "Whence do you come, Hannah Lea?" "From the study chapter where they examined my fatherless boy. His father is not present to check the progress of his studies, wherefore I am duty bound to take him to the *dayan* (arbiter of rites) for examination. . . ." With such or similar words Hannah Lea stops a while before each domestic group on her homeward progress. Jossele walks beside his mother, with a composed and quietly gladsome expression on his face. The women look after mother and child and smile their approval.

Upon arrival at their own threshold, mother and son sit down upon the front-bench. It is a Sabbath evening of gentle warmth, in keeping with the season. The townspeople are sitting within the shade of their houses. The men are coming from worship, the boys are romping in the streets playing at games of catch—among them, to be sure, the “bandits.” The girls in their new Sabbath dresses are walking up and down and nodding into all the windows: “Good Sabbath!” And the sun goes down in golden splendor behind the wings of the windmill.

Little Rachel with other girls is promenading the street. Her mother talks to Jossele, seriously and on the footing of an equal.

“It is a long time since your father wrote!”

“Perchance there has been a delay in the mails,” said Jossele soothingly, indicating the remoteness of America with a sweeping gesture of his little hands, so as to make his mother understand, that a letter may well be delayed in transit across such a vast distance. At the sight of the setting sun he turns quickly to Hannah Lea with a question:

“Father is getting out of bed now, mother, is he not?”

"How is this known to thee?"

"Why, mother, the sun in America is now rising; their day begins over yonder when the sun is setting with *us*," explained Jossele eagerly, underscoring his explanation with an emphatic gesture. But Hannah Lea only answers with a sigh and a melancholy headshake:

"Alas, he left me alone—left me behind..."

"Does he feel any better then?" Jossele defended the absent father. "Surely he misses us as much as we miss him."

With the darkness of night came all of a sudden *Muhme* Sheindel. No one had noticed her approach, with her half-suppressed: "Good week!" The hectic red cheeks flamed under her shawl and her weird titter: "Hi, hi; hi! punctuated her coughing.

Whenever *Muhme* Sheindel made one of her sudden appearances, Hannah Lea felt the heartache of an evil premonition. She knew that the *Muhme* did never come save on weighty errands and her flustered tittering and coughing seemed to portend that this time she had come on an errand of special importance.

The *Muhme*, after her wont, sat down in a

corner and asked: "Has my husband been here?"

Hannah Lea would not give her sister-in-law the satisfaction of bluntly asking what was doing. She kept her seat, but jumped up every few minutes shouting some command at Rachel or the boy, and dropping to the floor the glass she was about to fill with tea for the *Muhme*, who kept on coughing in her dark corner, and tittering: Hi, hi, hi!

Leibush came shortly thereafter. He never came with the *Muhme*. In their calls she always arrived first on the spot, with her husband trailing behind. He seated himself in silence, gravely stroking his beard. Hannah Lea, with Rachel near her, sat as if on live coals, but would not demean herself to question him. Jossele cowered motionless in his corner, an infant prodigy of mature sedateness. Even the "band" kept strangely quiet. Both boys stood lounging against the wall curiously eyeing uncle and aunt. As the *Muhme* coughed and tittered, the smaller of the two stuck his tongue out in derision, but his bigger brother tugged his sleeve exhortingly—even he understood that something serious was under way.

After a few minutes of unbroken silence

Leibush began, with a funereal voice and without glancing at anyone, as if addressing the wall:

"I received a letter from Meir."

"What does he write?" asked Hannah Lea, now breaking silence in her turn.

Leibush took the letter from out of his breast-pocket. "He bids me go to his family and to urge their speedy passage to America. He desires his wife and children to come to America."

Another minutes's silence ensued—Hannah Lea did not know what to say.

"Hi, hi, hi," began the *Muhme* suddenly from her dark corner. The junior member of the "band" could no longer restrain himself. "Hoh, hoh, hoh," he aped the *Muhme*, and his laugh rang out from the wall. All looked at him, but no one had a mind just then to reprimand him.

"I am to go to America?" Hannah Lea finally asked vacuously—her dazed mind was groping for a foothold.

The uncle unfolded the letter. "He writes," Leibush resumed in his listless voice, reading and commenting by turns, "he writes me he doesn't know what to do. He lacks sufficient

money for a return voyage. Furthermore, to what end should he come home? He cannot in decency do manual work at home; as for making a new start in business, he lacks capital, and there is no saying when he will lay by enough for a beginning. For although America is reputed to be a country where money may be gathered up from the pavement, yet does it hold good, there as elsewhere: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread.' Nor is there any sense in living apart. For a year he has had to maintain two households and to live without wife and children. Of late he took counsel with a kinsman who advised him to provide passage for his wife and children to America, inasmuch as such a passage may be paid for on the instalment plan. And as regards true Jewishness, it's there as everywhere. With a firm will it may well be kept intact. Despite a great many evil lapses in ritual around him, he sticks to domestic tradition. To go thither with children is a true blessing. Little Rachel will soon be able to earn money, for daughters in these parts prosper better even than sons. There is no other way. How long, in keeping with Jewish tenets, are they to live in separation? And

therefore, having no other to speak for him, he entreats his brother-in-law to go to his wife, talk matters over with her, soothe and console her—for the ocean, God willing, has no power of evil—are we not all in His hand. . . .”

Before Leibush came to an end with the letter, Hannah Lea broke into terrible heart-rending sobs. She knew not whether to rejoice over the letter or to mourn. She only felt her tears welling to her eyes and she cried with such vehemence that no one undertook to comfort her or to keep her from having her fill of lamentation. The boys, in awe-struck stillness, looked serious. Little Rachel cried softly to herself. All were waiting, in meditative silence, for mother’s weeping spell to come to an end. Only the voice of the *Muhme* incontinently mingled with the sobbing. Her shrill titter became audible all of a sudden, and that penetrating laugh of hers was more frightful even than mother’s weeping:

“Hi, hi, hi”—it broke again and again into Hannah Lea’s sobbing. . . .

CHAPTER VI

THE day before her departure from Leshna for America, Hannah Lea went to the cemetery, the "good place," to take leave of her dead parents.

Bent over her mother's grave, Hannah Lea cried aloud, with a voice broken with sobbing:

"Woe is me, in whose keeping didst thou leave me? I must travel now far across the awesome sea—to whom shall I turn on alien soil, at whose grave am I to give voice to my heart's grief—oh, mother, mother, how am I to leave thee behind me—never to see thee again, nor to call at thy resting place? Mother, mother, into whose hands doest thou deliver me?"

But under the sod of the "good place" there likewise lay two of her children, and Hannah Lea did not know how to part with them—they were a boy and a girl, the one older than Jossele, the other younger. Hannah Lea could

not bear the thought of leaving her children alone and behind her, of never, never visiting their graves again. Her mind was in a haze regarding the nature of this dereliction. With a mother's pathetic idiosyncrasy, she mingled the concept of two live children left behind with the thought of those unvisited in their lonely graves.

How often, in times ago, had Hannah Lea turned her steps toward the "good place!" To chance questioners on the road: "Whither away?" she used to answer: "to my two young treelets!" Whenever sorrow oppressed her heart, she sought relief in tears at her mother's grave—or, as a last resort, at her children's. "Run, run, oh children mine, hasten to God's holy throne and there beseech Him to take pity on your mother Hannah Lea, the daughter of Yentah, in the tribulation of her heart." The "bandits" and Jossele, too, were deeply interested in their little brother and sister. On memorial days they would bring their playmates to the tiny grave-mounds and brag about having a brother and sister enshrined there. It made them feel at the "good place" like owners of the soil, but Simon, their school-chum, was a still more important tenant,

for his father and mother were lying there below ground. . . .

After taking leave of her graves, Hannah Led lingered at the cemetery gate, exclaiming once again: "Mother dear, whither am I bound? And here I am leaving little Avrom and Hindele, my children!" And back she ran, prostrating herself once more upon the graves of the children—mounds almost obliterated under a rank growth of grass. Her tears had ceased flowing, she did not cry: "run, children and intercede for your afflicted mother!" She only thought of something to be left behind, something, not alive, but inexpressibly dear.

Dead children! And yet she could not tear herself away, though she knew that she was pressingly needed at home, where the entire baggage was waiting to be put in readiness. At last she rose, pulling herself together with an effort. "What am I loitering for," she murmured, "like a woman bereft of her senses?"

She did not leave at a brisk pace, she crept away from the "good place." She had a sentiment in her heart as of an unforgivable wrong committed. . . .

On her way home she met the men going for evening-service to the House of Prayer. It was

after the Harvest Holidays, the weather was cool and serene, the hour after sundown, and the trees were whispering.

At her house the driver was already waiting for the luggage. A huge bag cumbered the floor in the center of the room, with a chandelier protruding through a rent. The chandelier was still tricked out with festive blue paper-fringes with which it had been decorated last Passover. Involuntarily she was reminded of next Sabbath and its hidden prospects. Where and how would she make shift on Sabbath next to bless the candles? An alms-pyx was still hanging on the wall. Jossele was told to take it off and to carry it to the House of Prayer.

Then came *Vetter* Wolf with his wife. The woman carried something under her jacket—some victuals for the children “to stay them on the road.” *Vetter* Wolf was very kind to Hannah Lea and spoke to her in a most friendly vein. Meanwhile Leibush arrived with the “agent”—they had still to negotiate some detail. The room became impassable with the litter of a chaotic break-up. Bedsteads were telescoped, chairs piled up, the little bookcase carried out-of-doors, Rachel packed the bedding in the middle of the room. All about the

floor were littered straw and wastage. *Muhme* Sheindel coughed and tittered, then she shouted something into the room—she knew not what—ever since that evening she lived in a trance. . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE family sat closely huddled together in the train, with Hannah Lea hovering over the children, the bundles, the baskets, like a hen brooding over her eggs. Thus they went forth into the wide world. Hannah Lea never let her children stir from her side—lest one should be kidnapped or go astray. She shouted at the “bandits” without ceasing. Chaim was very keen to see everything worth seeing both within the train and without. He managed continually to sneak off on a tour of exploration, and each time the boy slid away from under her hands, Hannah Lea thought him gone and lost forever. Upon her fellow-travelers she looked with apprehension as if they harbored designs upon her own life and the lives of her children. She did not dare to speak to anyone or to ask a question, because the “agent” had instructed her: “Don’t enter into conversation with anyone!” although her traveling mates were people of her own speech and way of living.

In this wise they rode on, all day long, until they arrived, before break of night, at the station designated on the agent's slip of paper which Hannah Lea had carried in her hand all this time, a closely guarded treasure.

A young man in a rubber-coat, a cap of an outlandish pattern on his head, traversed the length of the train, asking in a subdued voice: "Anyone bound for the border?" That was the watchword taught her by the "agent." She handed the young man the slip of paper, and he secretly beckoned: "follow me!" Thereupon she quickly took hold of bundles and baskets, little Rachel led Jossele by the hand, the "bandits" were laden with luggage, trotting behind the young man as if on their way to the shambles. From that moment on Hannah Lea felt herself under restraint, like a prisoner. With this stealthy exodus began her real "voyage to America." Strangers shouted at her and ordered her about and she submitted to everything like a convict at the bidding of a keeper.

The young man abruptly called out to the driver. All of a sudden, he shouted, in a rough pitch of voice: "Hide—the gendarmes!" In the same instant he himself disappeared

as if the earth had swallowed him. For a few minutes Hannah Lea stood alone on the station-platform with her children and her baggage, in exquisite distress of mind, not knowing what to do. She expected any moment to be taken in charge by one of the border-patrol and to be thrown into jail, together with her children. And truly, she felt like a great criminal, because of her intent to cross the border. . . . But just when she altogether gave herself up for lost, the young man reappeared and growled out an order to the driver. Hannah Lea and the children hastened to the cart already packed with men and women. They were thrown into the cart like bundles of baggage and the team went off at a furious gallop.

After a two hours' ride the wagon turned into a roomy yard. A black oppressive night brooded over the nearby fields. Somewhere, close to the yard, a river ran, and the wind blew cool. Dogs gave mouth, outbellowing each other. This, Hannah Lea felt, was the portal to "the great desert to be crossed" before one reached America. A door was thrown open, disclosing the large sleeping quarters of a wayside inn, where they saw, in the faint

illumination of a little night-lamp, an entire horde of emigrants, the family-groups with their bundles resting upon the floor.

The newcomers quickly sought and found accommodation. Hannah Lea found a bundle of hay for herself and her children to rest upon. She looked about her and was a good deal relieved in her mind to see that the people around her were Jews, although they spoke their Yiddish in a Lithuanian dialect. She saw them settle at their ease, get their *samo-vars* ready and distribute bread and gherkins among the family-members—and witnessing this, Hannah Lea remembered her own little swallows left without anything to enter their beaks since dawn of day. She opened a bundle and distributed her “rich” kinswoman’s gift of provender—rolls and sausages.

The family drank tea out of a glass that went from hand to hand. A woman sat down upon a bundle, close to Hannah Lea, and asked:

“Are you, too, bound for America?”

But Hannah Lea had been cautioned upon leaving to tell no one on the road of her American destination—to tell all inquirers she was going to Breslau with an ailing child.

Therefore she answered the woman now as taught:

"No, I am traveling with my child to a physician beyond the border."

The woman bit her lips. Then she shouted merrily to someone in a corner: "To be sure, Joel, they are also going to consult that physician in Breslau." And a laughing response came forth from out of the corner:

"Why, of course, we are all bound for Breslau—our journey's end is Breslau, not a doubt!"

The woman continued to ply Hannah Lea with questions:

"Do you have a husband over yonder?"

Hannah Lea understood now that they were all in the secret, so she said:

"Do *you* have your husband over yonder?"

Her neighbor heaved a deep sigh: "Would to God I did not have him there the way I have him!" This strange reply bewildered Hannah Lea, who was loath to pursue the subject. She turned to her children in dismay. Just then Jossele's head dropped wearily into her lap—with a crust of bread in his hand and a mumbled benediction on his lips, the child fell

asleep. But the stranger drew closer to Hannah Lea and told her tale unbidden:

“Eight years ago he went beyond the sea. I’ll have thee come to me next year, he said—I am still waiting. He left me, with a child on my hands and an infant at my breast. I thought him dead when I received word from some of our townsfolk, that he lives over there with another who bore him children. I am taking passage across now with my poor little doves (she pointed to her sleeping children). Why, I am told, they won’t let me enter port in America unless *he* calls for me on ship-board. There is a *free* country for you!”

Hannah Lea’s heart beat furious and fast. *Muhme* Sheindel’s accounts of life in America flashed through her brains. Her lips began to tremble, and with nerveless hands she stroked Jossele’s little head. What if perchance her Meir. . . . ? Who can tell . . . America . . . a vast land . . . !

But Meir’s image soothingly arose before her mind’s eye and she repeated to herself: “No, not Meir, not he!”—And though her heart would stay at rest, Hannah Lea proudly told the woman making inquiry after her husband:

"*My* husband (underscoring the possessive pronoun) awaits my coming in America. It's only a twelfth month he went there and we are already called upon to join him."

"You are fortunate in your husband!" said the woman, nodding her head. "There are still *men* in this world, I see. Alas," she sighed, "what didn't I do to make him keep faith with me! I have been portrayed in a new hat and sent the picture overseas! They told me: 'Put on a fine head-covering, send him thy portrait, rouge thy cheeks, show him that thou art likewise a comely woman!' I carmined my cheeks, I borrowed a bonnet from the wealthiest woman in town, I sent him my portrait . . . alas!" The woman groaned, and eyeing Hannah Lea intently, repeated: "There are still *men* in this world—only a year across and he sends for his wife and children!"

Hannah Lea spat quickly to the ground to keep the stranger's envy from beshrewing her own better fortune. She drew her nestlings closer to herself, recalling Chaim who had already made friends with other children in the room. He too, had to sit down close to her

side so as not to be "beshrewn" by the strange woman.

When she had gathered her own around her, she asked with a certain complacency in her voice, pointing to the corner whence the woman had emerged: "And who are these; do they belong to you?"

"They are my townsfolk—a bridal couple bound for America."

"So," said Hannah Lea in maternal concern.

Presently the whimpering of a child was heard.

"Aha, it's my baby already awake," said the stranger. "Well, we shall be shipmates then—and with this she returned to her corner.

"What are shipmates?" called Hannah Lea after her.

"We are to take passage on the same steamer," replied the woman, from out of her corner.

Meantime the entire company had fallen asleep and here and there sounds of snoring became audible. The children were lying on their mothers' bundles, their fathers slept leaning against baskets and boxes. In the glimmer of the night-lamp they all looked like shadows, like eternal wanderers come from an alien world, bound for an alien world, journey-

ing day and night. Their physiognomies expressed the enigmatic gloom of everlasting banishment. Here sat a mother, baby in arms, there slept a father with his offspring in his lap. Their reflections and the shadows of bundles and blankets sprawled grotesquely over the walls. They looked like refugees from a sacked town—as if the Holy Temple had been burnt to ashes the other day, as if they were scurrying the roads from off Jerusalem, with the Roman soldiery in pursuit, before them the way into life-long banishment, into exile without end. . . .

An old man's voice rose from a corner. He recited, prayer-book in hand, in the *chiaroscuro* of the room the terrible chant: why did the peoples rise in enmity, why did the nations plot against us?" And his voice, senile, cracked, and Jewish withal, had the effect of a millenarian echo. . . .

Two hours later some burly fellows came to take the entire mob of emigrants across the border. Only a moment before their arrival Hannah Lea had dropped asleep, with a box to the rear of her for a pillow. The young man in the rubber-coat made the rounds, rousing the sleepers, one by one. Heads rose erect

in every corner, people everywhere struggled to their feet, the men, half in a stupor, took hold of their baggage, mothers shook their children into wakefulness and lifted them to their arms—at last they took the road in speechless gloom.

Rachel took her little brother by the arm. Jossele, altogether weary and sleepy, didn't know his bearings nor what was going on about him—he clung to his mother in affright. The "bandits," too, were in drooping spirits—they were still, sad and in a pensive mood. Only Rachel walked erect among them, encouraging the boys and mindful of everything.

At first the way led along the highroad. The smugglers took the lead, behind them in a dense swarm the emigrants. The night was cold and clear. The moon broke through the clouds, dismaying the train leaders. For a goodly while they hesitated, deliberating over a postponement of the expedition. As they took counsel, the sky became overclouded and between whiles the moonlight turned faint and fainter. That gave the drivers new hope and the caravan proceeded on its way, which now led across meadows wet with the nocturnal dew. Far off a huge and lumpy shadow

came in sight. It was a forest that had to be crossed. Little Jossele, shivering with cold, could not keep the quick pace of the wanderers, and Hannah Lea lagged a little behind. But the leaders vehemently shouted at her to make haste, and the frightened lad, with a prematurely developed instinct of Jewish submissiveness, began to run at top speed—and thus they reached the woods.

It was a dense forest. The night turned darker, the moon withdrew behind the clouds, and the “agents” felt at ease. For the sake of greater security, they divided the crowd into several detachments winding their way through clusters of trees and bushes. Branches barred the way, every moment there was another halt in front of tanglewood, and disentanglement was difficult. In Jossele’s vision, spooks were gliding everywhere between the trees—they will presently draw near, he thought, in their white raiment and go to the water there to perform the religious rite of ablution—for these are the souls of the dead that are about to take a purifying plunge into the waves ere they ascend to heaven, ready for the Last Judgment. . . .

Tales he had heard in school, tales he had

read in the story-books bought on Fridays at Jacob's, the bookbinder's stall, told of wild woods and waste fields full of shadows and apparitions, infested with bandits keeping princes and princesses in bondage, keeping them enchained in abysmally deep caverns. There, in the woods, lies that rock barring the entrance to a cave leading straight to Paradise. Jossele felt sure that this must be the terror-haunted forest of his story-books—for was it not matter of common knowledge that one had to pass through a wilderness of woods and woeful waste lands before reaching America? And it seemed to him that roads were leading from this forest to the Holy Land of Israel and to all the countries on earth. But assuredly, where the woods came to an end, there dwelt the anthropophagi of his story-books, giants with huge beards.

At every heart-beat he expected them to come. And behold—there they are—a clatter of galloping horses from afar, with echoes resounding. Who rides through the night? Stillness all of a sudden, steps are halted, all throw themselves headlong upon the ground. Jossele's mother, hiding, drags him down, close to her body, on the ground—the entire

train of emigrants, scarce daring to breathe, lies prostrate upon the earth, between the trees—no sound save the clatter of horses is heard—a tumult drawing nearer, retreating, reverberating in echoes . . . at times they seem to draw closer, the man-eaters—they will presently arrive on the spot, surcingle them, drag them all into captivity, lock them up in cages, fatten them, kill and roast one of them every day . . . a child frightens the multitude with its whimpering, mothers are clapping their hands to the mouths of sobbing infants. Jossele hears someone right near him recite a confessional with a tremulous voice, others whisper their prayers, with faces bent earthward, into the grass. He hears his mother's whisper: "Lord of Abraham, deliver us!" Little Rachel, too, prays softly at his side: "Great Lord in Heaven!" in the intonation of her mother blessing the Sabbath candles. It seems to him as if they were making ready to say the Prayers for the Dying—he is on the verge of tears. The mother whispers: "Jossele, Jossele, be still, they'll soon pass." No, he won't weep, lest "they" hear his voice—he won't betray to them his whereabouts. He'll pray like the grown-up folk, like all the

rest: "Great Lord in Heaven!" No, not so, the other prayer, the longest, the one said when soul and body part, the prayer of all Jews in peril of life or in the presence of an apparition.

"Hear Israel, the Eternal One, thy God, is an only God." The little lad prayed fervently—and who knows but what his prayer was hearkened to. Ere long the tumult of clattering hoofs grew faint and fainter and presently died out beyond the woods.

"Praised be the Creator!" said Hannah Lea, with eyes turned heavenward. "The Archfathers have prayed for us! . . ." Thus went the journey, all through the watches of the night.

On the morrow, the emigrants, now safe beyond the border, were led "to the bath." As they went through the government-prescribed process of "disinfection," they all felt like pieces of merchandise, shipped to America, handled and overhauled in transit time and again, until they reached port.

CHAPTER VIII

A FEW days later the pilgrims were safe aboard a big steamer. The ship as yet lay motionless in port. The steerage-passengers were embarked on deck the day before sailing. Everything aboard ship was astir and in a bustle of commotion. There were passengers of all nations, but the bulk of them were Little Russian peasants. At first Hannah Lea and her children could not find their bearings in the turmoil and uproar encompassing them on every side. People spoke and shouted in every one of the tongues of Babel. Hannah Lea did the best she could, she drifted with the current, following where others led. She averted her looks from the waters in her terror of the deeps. Herself and hers she put into God's Keeping . . . all day long people were in search of each other. Baggage was trundled about, no one could find his belongings, all shouted in concert.

Hannah Lea was led below, into deep cellar-like quarters. She took Jossele by the hand and descended, trusting in God's protection . . . at last a straw-mattress—one between numberless others—was assigned her, and there she cowered with her children, afraid to stir. A great fear of the ocean surged up in her.

But in the compartment occupied by her things soon became more homelike. She heard people around her talk in Yiddish and forthwith became aware that all her room-mates were Jews. Her traveling abode was the "Jewish Compartment."

"Why, there she is—where have you been all day long?" Hannah Lea turned about and faced her collocutor of the frontier inn. In conversation, Hannah Lea accepted the stranger now on the confidential footing of an old acquaintance.

"Where have you been all day? I have been looking for you high and low?" And the two neighbors with their little folk snuggled close to each other, chatting like old cronies at a re-union. Their chumminess spread like an infection. Everyone within sight struck up an acquaintance with everyone else. Places of birth or domicile were

made known, mutual acquaintances inquired after, and presently it became plain that there were points of contact interlinking all of them. In their talk, degrees and ramifications of kinship were searchingly sifted, until it became manifest that one-half at least of this human shipload were relations in the third or fourth degrees of consanguinity.

"If that's the case," a merry voice was heard, "we might as well say evening prayers!"

"Why, of course!" some voices promptly responded.

"Do you mind," someone reminded them from out of a corner, "that this is the evening appointed for lighting the first candle?"

An auspicious omen this—to have boarded ship on the first day of *Chanukah*!"

"Is there an able cantor among us?" someone asked. "What a question! Don't we have the Keltzer cantor with us?" replied another steerage passenger, pointing to a young man with a reddish fringe of beard who stood a little aloof from the others. "How do you know him for the cantor of Keltz?" "Let me alone for knowing a cantor!" He beckoned the young man with the reddish beard to come nearer. "Did you note his resonant bass-voice

and his long thumb-nail? Besides, I have heard him recite ere this!"

It took a little while before the local celebrity of synagogue-chant, thus stripped of his incognito, would own, in the presence of his brethren, that he really and truly was the cantor of Keltz. It took another while, before he could be persuaded to officiate at a quickly improvised prayer-desk. But presently his guttural roulades rose from behind the desk illumined by two candles in a little box and men, women and children joined in the service of song.

In this wise was their evening service rendered impressive and beautiful. Then the question was asked: has anyone perchance *Chanukah*-candles? It turned out that they all were provided with candles, in readiness for the feast. Each family lit a tiny waxen candle affixed to a board, and the cantor once more took post behind the improvised prayer-desk. A few young voices for the choir were soon found. The Keltzer celebrity himself had brought a soprano aboard with him—his little son, with a voice the like of which the world had never heard—"America will be thrown into convulsions"—and a *Chanukah*-song of

surpassing beauty was intuned. Hannah Lea forgot that she was on shipboard. She felt as if at home, in the House-of-Prayer, with nothing missing save her Meir. The melody rose and fell, the little soprano was indeed astonishing, everyone capable of giving mouth joined. All Jews on shipboard gathered round, a guard shouting something into the crowd was quickly silenced, and higher and higher rose the song.

When the cantor had finished, a merry-faced little man said, rubbing his hands in glee:

“Omelettes would be in order now, and the fattest of fat goose-cracklings, in honor of the feast.”

“Exactly” assented a sympathetic bystander, “and a game of cards atop.”

“Right!” nodded the little man, “a game of cards to finish with!”

“You’re welcome to goose-cracklings!” said a woman, hospitably proffering a greasy package.

“My daughter’s gift—to make things more home-like on the road,” answered the hospitable one, with an effect of explaining the obvious. She felt that goose-cracklings were an item of home-life to the homeless.

And thus, within a few minutes' time, these erstwhile strangers, Jews from distant zones and scattered towns, sat at the same board, they and their offspring, eating from the same plate, treating each other to tid-bits, feeling like members of one and the same family, united in sentiment, as if their friendship dated from time immemorial, as if they had known each other when the high halidom of the Temple stood intact, fellow-refugees of the first Exile and wandering now into another to America. . . .

Only Jossele did not feel well at ease. In vain did his mother tug his sleeve during the cantor's recital. Where was Jossele's beautiful "amen," his lovely benediction once far-famed all over town? Forgotten, as it seemed, for his big, shining eyes peered through the port-holes into the night, upon the sea. There it is, the mighty waste of waters whereof his Scriptures said that they had no end, that the heavens arose from them, that the earth was submerged in them. Dark is the sea and silent, a cold and grave infinity forever on the flux. A whale rises from the rayless depth, a powerful monster, a terror approaching with a frightful snort. It beats

the ship-planks in its rage, it opens its cavernous maw to devour the vessel. The steamer and its human freight were both on the point of being engulfed, when the Lord raised his voice and called out: No! Whereupon the monster in its fury turned upon its side, with a mighty splash, and disappeared below the floods . . .

And now the heavens are descending upon the sea! Behold, the sea rises heavenward, darkness descends upon both, all of a sudden tiny flames are lit up amid-seas, they seem suspended between water and sky, only a few at first, then entire rows, hundreds, thousands, and now they look like stars—amazing! Do they celebrate *Chanukah* on high! Has the ocean lit its lamps or are these the lights of heaven, shining through celestial window-panes from beyond the seas?

Meantime the "Jewish Compartment" hushed up. Some of the families sought their straw-mattresses and went to sleep. Many were busy writing to their folks a "last salute from ship-board," in the gleaming of a moribund *Chanukah* candle. But Jossele did not waver from his mother's side on the mattress, his big eyes peering through the night, gazing steadfastly

upon the sea. A deep and heavy darkness lay upon the waters and nothing was heard save the hollow thunder of the waves beating against the flanks of the steamer. And Jossele meditated whence came the waves? From the dark abyss, belike, far, far beyond the lights, where the Leviathan lieth, a footstool of this earth—let him as much as stir and the entire world tumbles into ruin. But God said: Lie thou still! and the Leviathan lies motionless. And there, of a truth, he beheld him now in the darkness, the Leviathan, head, rump and tail, rapidly heading for the ship—a single convulsive movement, and all would be hurled to the bottom of the sea.

“Mother!” yelled Jossele all of a sudden in heart-rending entreaty. Hannah Lea, with a terrified start, looked about her, wild-eyed and forlorn. “Pray, Jossele, and go to sleep,” she whispered, covering his head with her shawl.

CHAPTER IX

IT was a beautiful day. The sun irradiated the sea, in eagerness as it were, for a last display of glory unhampered by roofs and turrets. The waves in front of the ship, the backwash behind, the waters all around were aglow with a radiancy of deflected light, unbearable to the human eye. There was holiday-making on board. The coast of America was near, invisible as yet save to the inward eye of the pilgrims who expected every moment to sight land.

The sailors, on the day before, had cleaned the entire ship. Sea-gulls, winged messengers of an approaching haven, came in sight that day. All through the night they fluttered near, before and aft. In their shrill monotonies was a fore-heralding of land. Numberless little vessels came in view. On the evening before the shout went through all the compartments: "Clear for a landing!"

The American flag on the main-mast flew

proudly in the breeze. All delved into their trunks to greet the land in holiday attire, all made for the deck to salute the coast. And there they stood, representatives of every race on earth, anxious for a first glimpse of the great harbor, the portal of a new world. Little-Russian peasants in red tunics and conical black caps are vacuously staring at the water below. Their womenkind, haggard with fear, press little metal-crosses, now to their mouths, again to their hearts, in mute supplication. A Polish group, resplendent in the red of their national garb, gather their children about them. A tall, broad-shouldered Italian with a red neckerchief, carries a mandolin in his hand. His voice and instrument are all he carries into exile of the wealth of his native country. A sea of varied tints is outglared by a colored shawl on the head of a Spanish woman. Out of a mass of human heads arises the Christ-like physiognomy, pale and bearded, of a dark-complexioned Polish Jew. A group of Ruthenian peasants kneel in fervent devotion around a crucifix towering high above their heads. In another corner, the Polish peasantry gather about a church-banner, raising their voices in a chant more resembling a heart-rending la-

mentation than a song. And the sun pours a flood of light upon the deck blending the colors of garments and the tints of every national costume on earth into a garishly transluminated panorama. The melodies mingle, the tunes are wafted seaward and blend with the tumult of the waters into one mighty pæan upon the Promised Land, the desired of stormily pulsating hearts and longing eyes.

Now that the ship draws near to port, Hannah Lea ascends from the "cellar" where she had lain twelve days and nights. There she stands, among the multicolored throng, her cap of state on her head, the new shawl around her shoulders, with Jossele on her arm, Rachel and the "bandits" at her side. She had washed Jossele's little face until it shone with cleanliness, curled his side-locks and put his Sabbath-cap on his head so that he might find favor in the eyes of the Americans. With the same end in view she had brushed the coats of the "bandits," shined their shoes, put little Rachel into her new Sabbath dress and pleated her hair into two pretty braids. And there they stand, getting nearer and nearer to the haven where father awaits them—he who went before to make them a home.

Hannah Lea sings no song, she has neither song nor speech. Why speak? God knows her heart's desire. Not to displease Meir, she thrusts back her hair under her head-covering, as beseems a Jewish matron. With a rapid glance at the children, she thinks: What will he say to them?

All of a sudden mighty shouts ring out on deck and entire groups of people fall upon their knees, making the sign of the cross. Hannah Lea looked up in afright, into a luminous haze, and out of that mirage rose the sharp outlines of high, quadrangled hills, unlike anything she had ever seen before. Everyone on shipboard stared wide-eyed now upon these strange, four-square hills. As the ship drew nearer and nearer to landing, the haze became thinner and transparent, revealing to their eyes five mountainous steel-frames in a row, barring view of everything in their rear. These were the first "sky-scrapers" they had ever seen in their lives.

From all sides there appeared now bright-colored vessels plowing the sea with incredible swiftness. Sirens were shrilling everywhere, hollow hooting and screaming signals reverberated through the fog, bewildering the

immigrants. The church-choir became mute, the crucifix disappeared, a deep stillness fell upon the deck. All felt infinitely small and oppressed in sight of the grandeur now revealed. Only Hannah Lea had cast all fear behind her. She felt safe in God's keeping, for there, behind the enveloping haze, the father of her children was waiting.

The ship groaned, made a few spasmodic motions, and stood stockstill. A boat drew near, and two men displaying the insignia of American officials came on deck. Upon their bidding, the immigrants drew up in a row and passed them in single file. The two were the physician and the inspector of the American Immigration Bureau.

All hearts began to beat in fear. All drew themselves up erect, tidied their garments, and tried to appear in the sight of the two officials as brisk and energetic as possible. And thus they passed in review, Ruthenians, Poles, Jews, Russians, Italians, Spaniards, the men in single formation, the women with their children. The officials scrutinized them carefully, hammered their chests, looked into their eyes, felt their muscles, as if to test the human raw material come hither across the sea, to serve

America in their own generation and to take possession of the soil in the next. . . .

When Hannah Lea's turn came she divided her herd, like Archfather Jacob of old: first she presented little Rachel in the beauty of her braids—and Rachel, finding favor in the eyes of American officialdom, was passed for admission. Then followed the “bandits.” They went before the examiners hand-in-hand, sturdily treading the deck with their new Sabbath boots. Their eyes and throats were examined, their chests and backs found hale—passed for admission. Hannah Lea with Jossele came last. The physician took Jossele by the hand and looked into his eyes—the lad trembled and drew close to mother's skirts—he took the boy's cap off and examined his head—he called the inspector to his side!

An apprehension of some impending evil clutched at Hannah Lea's heart—her hands trembled.

“It's nothing!” she said. “A little rash from a past and gone attack of typhoid—nothing worth mentioning!”

The inspector beckoned a third man—not a word was said. The man grasped Jossele's hand and took him aside.

The little fellow tried to take hold of mother's skirts. His Jewish eyes dilated in anguish, his side-curls shook and trembled.

"A little rash—left of a past attack of typhoid," repeated Hannah Lea—in Yiddish—to the inspector. Nobody minded her—she was pushed aside—there were hundreds impatiently waiting to take her place.

"Woe is me, mother dear!" cried Hannah Lea. She hastened to the corner where Jossele stood apart, but her anxious glances made search for her children on the other side, among those favorably passed upon by the examiners.

On the other side stood little Rachel, flanked by the "bandits." She nodded to her mother soothingly—her nod said: "You may rely upon me—I'll see you through!"

CHAPTER X

MEUR went to the pier to take his family home on their arrival.

He had been looking forward to this day, he had been getting ready for it ever since that hour when he first set foot upon American soil.

When, on his ramblings through the streets, he noticed in the shop-windows something particularly attractive in low-priced garments, he bought it, carried it home and locked up his treasure against "their" coming—a hat, a cloak and other children's wear. In this manner he provided, as time went on, an entire wardrobe for wife and children. A dwelling to house them stood likewise ready—the *Vetter* had helped him with the renting—only a basement, right near to the *Muhmes'* in Third Street—but, as he told himself, at least a roof of his own—and now he was on the way to take them off the steamer.

He had been with them in the spirit through-

out their entire voyage across the sea. Every day he went to the ticket-office to inquire about the bearings of the ship amid-seas. The office had told him the other day that the steamer would dock in Hoboken on the day following at one in the afternoon. There, he knew, his family would not be released in his care—only cabin-passengers may land in Hoboken. He would have to claim his own on Ellis Island, later in the day. But there, in Hoboken, he may catch sight of his beloved standing on the deck, from afar.

On the eve of their landing he went to the *Muhme*. Certain of his townsmen had promised to accompany him to the pier. He stands now among an expectant crowd, peering through the window of a huge dock-shed, seeing the mighty steamship draw to port, nearer and nearer. It approaches at a slow and heavy pace, wrapt in a fog as if the secrets of the infinite deep it had crossed were hovering around its deck. Meir's heart was beating fast; his face was ashy, his hand stroked his beard with a tremulous and unsteady grasp. Presently he'll sight them, his own left behind him in Leshna, and the impending reunion seemed to him a miracle wrought by Grace

Abounding. He thought of Hannah Lea—his eye-lids trembled—a goodly housewife, he said, and the warmth of his rising sentiment abashed him. He reddened—actually blushed—and tried to think of something else.

Meantime the ship serpentined its way into the harbor. Hundreds of people jumped to the big, open windows of the shed to espy their kin from ashore. The steamer deck was alive with people pressing into shore-view—hundreds—saluting with their hands, waving white and red kerchiefs, flourishing flags. There was a minute of dead stillness—only the heavy groaning of the ship was audible as it approached the landing. Then cries rang out, here and there, the jubilations of the first landsmen catching sight of their kin, some hysterical ejaculations in between—the nearer the ship drew, the higher the choir of voices rose from deck and shore, until all sounds fused in a passionate outburst of joyful acclaim.

Meir's glances flew haggardly over hundreds of heads. He was blind and deaf to his surroundings—he used his elbows frenziedly to get close to the window. None of his family came within view—why? “Why?” his lips

murmured, and a cold perspiration gathered on his forehead. Presently he noticed a little group of children crowding toward the railing, a girl, some boys of lesser growth behind her—his own? His looks fasten upon them, his face brightens with joy, his eyes glitter, he extends his arms, he tries to hail them but his voice, as if frozen, fails him. Two keen-visaged eyes espy him—the eyes of Chaim. The boy wavers in doubt; can it be father? Presently he lifts both arms on high, breaking into a jubilant shout: father!—so shrill and ear-piercing in its delight that it seemed to resound from every spot on deck. A good many heads turned toward him: what ails the lad? But Chaim, heedless in his frenzy, his little sister and his “bandit” brother at his side, yelled lustily: It’s father, father, our father! until the bystanders soothed him.

But where was the mother of his children—and Jossele? asked Meir, and again his eyes searched haggardly a sea of human faces.

A few minutes later he knew it all.

Meir ran up and down the streets with the *Vetter* in search of aid. All his townsmen knew of the heavy blow that had befallen him.

He was directed to the editorial rooms of

the Jewish dailies, to a number of immigrant aid societies. The societies sent him to their attorneys—none could help. At last Meir resolved to go to Ellis Island unaided to get at least in touch with his flesh and blood.

On the Island an endless human chain unwound its links in front of five iron barriers. At each barrier officials stood, requiring the newcomers to show the prescribed minimum amount of cash and to exhibit sturdy limbs capable of doing their share in the world's work. This living chain was unending, ever new ships came to land unloading their human freight, the young and the old, men and women of every breed and tongue under the heavens, in scores of multicolored costumes. And to this day, to this minute the endless chain is unwinding, turning off its human links, one by one through the great House-of-Passage on the Island.

The faces of the men and women passing through this hall of muster on their way to the "golden country" are apprehensive with fear. Their hearts beat stormily, their hands tremble, their gods are invoked in multitudinous tongues—each feeling akin to those that pass in front, to those that walk behind.

A common fear unites their souls in kinship as commands are shouted in a language they all hear for the first time in their lives. . . .

Meir descended upon the Island. His heart was burning with an indignant sense of outrage, and his lips shut tight. He dramatized inwardly a long remonstrance before "American evildoers." To tear a father from his children—who ever heard the like? An outcry rose from his inwards: verily, this exceeds the wickedness of Sodom! What was he expected to do? Throw his child into the water?

Do they mean to deport the lad? Terror gripped him as he thought of such a possibility. Out upon such a thought! Yet he could not help to ponder the matter, in the sheer fascination of his horror. What—a little child to cross alone the sea, the awful waste of waters!

He hastened to the legal representative on the Island of a society in aid of Jewish immigrants, with a letter someone had given him. "I'll tell him everything!" he thought. "Did you ever hear the like? And this is America—free America!" At the lawyer's office he speedily found out that his troubles were by no means a singular affliction—a parcel of

Galician Jews stood around a large table, howling, vociferating: "Accursed be America, woe upon Columbus and his land!" A woman sobbed in a corner: her daughters were debarred from landing. A youth was loudly airing his grievance about his bride awaiting deportation. And all in a wild chorus of exclamations adjured the attorney to plead for admission of their sipp. The lawyer listened to them unmoved by the clamor around him, making an entry now and then into his notebook. It was plain that he was used to such scenes.

At last Meir succeeded in getting his attention. He handed him the letter. The attorney—an even-tempered young man—gathered the contents at a glance while Meir trembled in all his limbs. He tabled the letter on top of a pile of similar correspondence, took off his eyeglasses, blinked, shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"I can't do anything in the matter."

"But a child—think! A child—a little child!" spluttered Meir, with chattering teeth as if in a fever.

Again the young man shrugged his should-

ers. "One might appeal to Washington," he said.

But Meir paid no heed. "I must see my family!" he hissed between his teeth. "I must see them—yes—see them!"

"No difficulty about that!" the attorney reassured him. He rose from his seat and left the room with the unfortunate father.

They climbed some flights of stairs leading to a room where Meir had to wait.

Presently Hannah Lea was brought into the room. For a second they stared at each other blankly, without a sign of recognition. Then the woman broke into a hysterical shout: "Meir!" Her wild sobbing raked and tore his heart.

He had been embittered against her and her evil fortunes. But now such an impact of compassion with the hapless woman shook and rocked him where he stood, that he caressed her tearstained face, stroked her dishevelled hair, smoothed her garments with a trembling hand, biting his lips as if in the clutch of tetanus.

And behold, Hannah Lea took comfort in the warmth of a matrimonial affection she had

never known before, and her heart melted in tears.

"I alone am to blame, I and no other," she sobbed at last amid tears. "My bitter lot, my evil star!" she wept, hiding her face behind her hands.

"How art thou to blame, oh witless one, how is it thy fault" said Meir, covering his eyes with his hands.

For a moment both stood in forgetfulness of self, made one through the magnitude of their misfortune. It was perhaps the only moment of complete unification in all their lives.

"And where are the children?" Meir reminded himself after a while.

"How am I to know?" grumbled Hannah Lea, guiltily. But upon her reply the door opened and the children were brought into the room. At sight of father and mother the "bandits" yelled with delight. So uproarious was their jubilation and so loud the weeping that officials came from all sides to soothe them. But Hannah Lea would not be comforted. She sobbed aloud, beating her forehead with her fists:

"Jossele, Jossele, my poor child!"

Meir, with a jerky motion, turned his back upon them all. He clattered downstairs and, facing the youthful lawyer, roared:

"I demand that you write a letter to the President in person. Tell him—tell him—" words failed him in his torment of soul. The young man raised his eyes to him and recoiled in terror. Meir's face was distorted and ghastly white, his eyes glared, his teeth were buried in his lips. Not a word could he utter, but there was such a world of pain and white-hot anger in his features, that the young attorney withdrew in fear from the stricken man and the enormity of his blight.

Jossele meanwhile sat in a big room in the midst of a crowd, waiting for his mother. When Hannah Lea was taken from his side, he shed no tears nor did he seek to detain her. Ever since the great stroke descended upon him, he had kept silent, as if in atonement for some hidden sin. In this Jewish child the entire resignation of his people, its meekness under suffering, had a renascence.

He felt ready to encounter blows, as if his parents and theirs had planned for him a thorny road. Still and introspective, like a full-grown man under an affliction, he sat

without his mother, like a philosopher beyond the reach of harm and grieving only because his mother was torn from him and the joy of his brothers in the reunion of their parents was marred.

The room he sat in was known in popular parlance as "the Island of Tears"—a well-chosen designation. For in this room were detained all those condemned to return with the ships they came in, and those whose fate was uncertain, pending decision of their appeal to the authorities in Washington. They were mostly forlorn folk and miserable, lonesome, without friends or relatives to take them from the steamer, very ancient people or very young, whose strength was not its own warrant for admission, people in need of others to vouch for them and finding none. And thus they looked like scattered seed fallen upon the stony wayside from a load of grain in the shipping. . . .

CHAPTER XI

THERE were those among them who still had hopes of admission. They had relatives to be written to, somewhere in the country. They were happier, better off than the others to whom they promised succor: if, God helping, they were admitted to a landing, they would see the others righted, too. Especially solicitous on behalf of the luckless was an elderly woman known by the surname of "Everybody's Aunt." This woman had a nephew in Chicago "a Man of Affairs and an American." "Only let him come," she consoled, "and he will soon get everybody out of quod." On the way to the great dining-room on shipboard (the place of chance-encounters with everyone afloat) she questioned everybody in sight about her nephew, as if they all were supposed to know her kinsman, the "American and Man of Affairs."

"The others" kept still. Old Jews in search of children of uncertain whereabouts sat read-

ing psalms, women wept, frightened children cowered in nooks and corners. And upon all was the curse of the outcast, upon all pressed the fear of another sea-voyage with their first venture just behind them—the nightmare of a return to Old World misery.

“It is all one,” wept a woman, “let them drive me into the desert for aught I care—to whom am I to return when all are gone.”

“To be turned back!” yammered another, “Father in Heaven! After we sold our bedding to pay for our passage.” I told you from the very first not to go,” growled her husband, interrupting his psalm-reading. “Our boy is—God knows where!”—this in a tone as if the very existence of America had become matter of doubt to him.

“Bedding!” the wife resumed her plaint. “Alas, he has no shelter, no place where to rest his head!” She pointed to her husband as if she herself had been well provided for.

While the women mingled their lament, Jossele had found a little friend, a boy of about his own age. After a little shamefaced hesitation, they joined hands and withdrew to a corner to talk over their predicament, in the manner of their elders.

"Art thou to be sent back?"

"Yes, and thou?"

"Even so."

"Why?"

"They say my eyes are bad."

"And I because of a rash on my head left from typhoid." Jossele took off his cap and bared the scar.

"Hast thou a father in America?"

"Yes—and thou?"

"I am orphaned. I came to stay with an uncle."

Forthwith Jossele conceived a great regard for the boy—he felt himself below the rank of a genuine orphan. After these preliminaries the two little sons of Israel began, gravely and sedately, to discuss their joint misfortune.

Jossele's mother returned, still wet-eyed, looking upon him with pained affection. The boy understood the whole extent of the misery wrought through his ill-luck: he was at fault, only he . . . and he felt guilty, as if it all, beyond dispute, had been his own doing.

The appeal to Washington proved unavailing. Within a few days confirmation came of the original decision: Jossele was to leave with the next steamer.

The whole family foregathered on the Island. For a while all kept silent, in their common foreknowledge of a dread decision to be presently made. Question was: who was to go with Jossele?

Of course, the mother had to stay, to take care of a household established but the other day.

Hannah Lea wept: "I won't let the child go from my side—lest I lose it. Come what may, I go with my child . . . "

But Rachel said, in the tone of an adult: "Who will mind the children, with father at his work? You just stay—I am going," she decided, putting her shawl to rights as if for a mere call on her uncle.

Meir faced little Rachel steadily and in silence. Hannah Lea did not cease to lament:

"How am I to let the two of you go alone? Thou, too, art only a child—bethink thee, a voyage across the big ocean! How am I to let you go?"

"Don't you worry—I'll know how to find a way," insisted the girl, again fingering her shawl as if ready to depart this minute.

"My poor child," lamented the mother, "my poor child!" She fell about her neck—and child

and mother kissed under tears like two full-grown women. Meir stood near by. He didn't speak—he bit his lips and tugged his beard.

Jossele was brought upon board of the steamer that was to deport him. He kept silent as if his little heart had been petrified by an awful experience. His father kissed him, upon his head he felt his mother's tears—he kept unbroken silence through it all. He looked upon himself as the only one at fault—well, may he then be the sole atonement! But he dragged little Rachel with him . . . He didn't raise his eyes to his sister's face. In his innermost heart he knew what it meant to have her leave her folks behind and to return with him. Speechless he sat and with his head drooping ever deeper earthward.

But as he stood on the gangway of the steamer, throwing a last backward glance at his parents, the child suddenly awoke in him and he began to sob:

“Mother!” he cried, his hot tears falling fast, “mother!” It seemed out of keeping with the wonted manner of the eight-year-old grown up to man's estate.

The night lay black upon the sea, engulfing everything, veiling creation from the eyes of

men. The ship struggled on through the waves as if tenantless, with no one visible on deck—like a vessel seeking a path through the darkness without guidance. A dense fog descended saturating and chilling everything on board with its own dampness. The ocean itself was invisible; it lay, as if buried under the nocturnal darkness; only the deep mighty breathing of the sea was audible—the waves that were heard, not seen, tumbling and clashing somewhere in the darkness without; their presence, felt but not sighted, was oppressive like the rumoring and howling of aqueous specters somewhere nearby.

In such a night no one cared to go on deck. In the elegant first-cabin parlor a concert was in full swing. Beautifully attired ladies and gentlemen in full dress were dancing to the dulcet tunes of a Vienna waltz. But at a distance of only fifteen yards from the brilliantly lighted drawing room, in a sombre nook, a little company were gathered close together, some cowering on the floor, others seated on bags and boxes. The fag-end of a candle on a nearby table illumines the scene. The leavings of a meal are on the table, an empty tumbler, scattered domino-stones—and in the

midst of this litter somebody is writing a letter. No one minds him—the attention of the entire company is centered elsewhere.

A large, dark-haired man with brooding eyes and beetling, black eyebrows, is telling tales. All are listening closely. Heretofore the stranger had kept silent. He was the only one among them whose ways and manner of living had not been disclosed to the rest the very first day on board ship. The tales he told now sounded weird enough. He had been everywhere on the face of the globe. Knew Africa as he knew his five fingers, all places ever entered by mortal man seemed to be known to him. Every little while, so he explained, he left his temporary biding place—exchanged it for another—not in search of bread which he claimed he could earn anywhere—but because of an innate craving for change that didn't let him come to rest. Nothing, he said, could bind him to a glebe. Upon arrival in a new town he would look about him, procure employment, stay a few months, half a year at most, then pack his belongings, and be off once more for parts unknown. He began his migratory life as a little child. Wealth like unto Rothchild's might have been his, if only he

could have prevailed upon himself to stay. But stay in any one place he can't—there is something in him that keeps him on the move. Just now he is bound for Russia, to the little town of his birth, there to visit the grave of his parents. He had seen his father in a dream—therefore he knows him to be dead. To be sure, he is uncertain of admission into Russia—having failed in due time to present himself for military service. However, at the risk of his life, he must visit his father's grave—else he would find no rest.

All listen to him attentively, peering into his eyes, as if fascinated by his wayside tales they sought there an image and reflection of the infinities he had traversed.

“Been in Africa?” asked a woman from out of her corner.

“Certainly,” replied the beetle-browed stranger promptly.

“I have a son there,” said the woman. “Did you, perchance, meet him?”

“Most likely—but how is that to be ascertained now?”

“Been in the Holy Land?” inquires an old man from his corner. From America, he was returning now to his native town to die there.

"Even so," replied the stranger.

"And have you seen Mother Rachel's grave?"

"I have seen it, to be sure, and gathered little stones there from the grave," declared the stranger. He took from a vest pocket a little bag filled with the holy earth which he literally wore next to his heart.

"Oh—oh!" they all marvelled.

"Upon my life, this is more important than to travel to America!" groaned the old man. "Wished to God my bones had had the good fortune to be buried there rather than to be packed off to America—if they *must* be shipped across the seas."

"I always wear this upon my heart. One does not know one's final resting place—it may even be somewhere among non-Jews. But if this (he pointed to the little bag) be laid upon my brow, it will be like resting upon Holy Soil.

"That's so!" groaned the old man going home to die. "Would I had this rather than to have been in America! Twelve years I have been residing in America with my son, golden rings, a gold-knobbed cane he gave me, and with these (he pointed to the rings) I am to be buried now."

"Perhaps, if you entreat him fair, he will

give you a little of the holy earth," said an old woman sitting at his side—his wife.

"Such things are not so easily come by," a woman neighbor reminded her. "What—ask for a gift that which is more precious than gold and diamonds?"

"For all that, it cost no money. Whosoever will, may gather it from the soil."

"Yes—after having been on it!"

But the stranger, it seemed, was so affected by the old man's words, that he poured some of the precious earth from out of the bag into his hand. The old man put it up with the utmost care, in his kerchief, and looked at the stranger with such a transport of gratitude that the tears came into the giver's eyes.

"Perhaps my father was like you," he said. "I have not seen my father—whenever I see an old Jew, methinks I see him."

"As for me, I would not willingly lose my native land, be it what it may, it is my native land."

All eyes turned in the direction of the speaker. Who was he that would not lose his "native land"? A young man, it appeared. Presently he added, with somewhat of a demonstrative air: "I know they will make me serve

a term with the colors—and yet, I go back to Russia. I do not want to lose my native land.”

“What, ‘native land’! I don’t know even whether they’ll admit me into my native land!”

CHAPTER XII

BUT why shouldn't they admit you?" "I gave my passport to someone else—and now America turns me back!"

"How can they refuse admission to you, a Russian?"

"There is nothing they may not do—in Russia."

At these words something stirred in a corner. A twelve-year-old girl timidly approached the company. Her black eyes scrutinized the faces of the by-standers in anxious apprehension. Presently she turned to a woman standing close to her.

"What wouldst thou have?" asked the woman.

"They have returned my little brother. I am going with him. Why does this man say that people are barred from re-admission into Russia?"

"Hast thou a passport?" demanded the woman.

"A passport?" Rachel stammered; but she collected herself in a moment. "What need is there of a passport if they won't admit him in America?" She pointed to little Jossele, who, wrapped in Rachel's cloak, slumbered in a corner, where he cowered like a little bundle of misfortune.

Her shipmates mustered her in silence. They had noticed the girl from the day of embarkation, but Rachel—true to her teaching—had kept so far aloof from her fellow-travelers, fearing to speak to anyone, that none of them had perceived the lonely distress of the children. They were understood to be in the care of their mother. Now it was made known that they traveled alone.

"And why didn't they admit him?"

"Because of a rash on his head—a scar left by typhoid," said Rachel, pointing with her finger to the sleeping Jossele, with an effect of maternal solicitude.

"What, didn't they admit ye? Just listen to this—not admit them! Out upon America—such an unfortunate youngster!" said a woman. She fetched a candle and bent over the sleeping lad. "What a pretty child—and where is your mother?"

“Mother had to stay to take care of the other children—that’s why I am taking him back myself.”

“What—art thou going back with him? . . . Why dost thou stand? Give her a stool to sit down, someone! There now, come hither, child, and sit thee down,” said another woman, rising from her chair. “Sit down—thou art surely weary-legged.”

“There—take this!” said another, offering a piece of ginger-bread. “Ah, the unfortunate mother—I feel for her!” groaned the giver of gifts, wiping her eyes in vicarious distress for Hannah Lea. “Assuredly,” another woman gave voice, “she cannot sleep at nights, this hapless mother. . . . Samuel, I say—Samuel, fetch an orange, will you? The girl looks faint.”

“Keep still!” admonished yet another, “lest ye awaken the lad.” And saying so, she covered him with her big shawl. “Poor fellow—chilled to the bone, I daresay, in this frosty air.” They all were full of compassion. All Jewish hearts on shipboard felt of kin with the children—all felt that they had to stand them in their parents’ stead.

Rachel knew not where to turn first, so

many gifts came pouring in upon her. Every Jewish woman within sight drew near to bemoan the children. Whatever they had of dainties in their boxes they put into Rachel's lap—oranges, cakes, chocolate—a whole assortment of tidbits. One woman offered her a comfortable resting place for the night, another wrapped her shawl around her body. A man bent over Rachel and whispered into her ear:

“Did your father supply you with money for the journey?”

“Of course,” replied Rachel, and pointed to a little bag she wore on a string around her neck. “This is but a trifle,” said the man, without counting the contents of the bag. “Samuel!” he called into a corner, “quick, give me a few shillings!” They all drew together, and a collection was made for the children.

When Jossele awoke, he felt himself translated into a new world. They all made much of him, petted him, tried to make him comfortable. At first the lad didn't understand—he looked at little Rachel, half frightened and half in amazement. His scarred head became an object of pitying interest. “A rash!” said

one of his new mothers-in-charge, examining it closely, "why, it's a mere nothing to make such an ado about! Rub the child's head with a handful of spirits and the rash will be gone in a twinkling. And for the sake of such a trifle to tear a child from his mother's lap! Savages they are—to deal so hardly with a Jewish child!"

"I know a physician in Berlin," said another, "if only he wants to, he will do away with that rash in the turn of a hand."

"If he wants to!" exclaimed a man. "Why, he'll be paid for doing it."

"To be sure!" others assented. "Why shouldn't he, if paid for doing it?"

"He is a man of great renown—a professor. He treats even crowned heads. A new York physician gave me his address—he is to treat me against the stone. I am suffering from gall-stones," said the woman. "Let's see his address!" demanded the man. The sufferer "from stone" fished a slip of paper from out of her handbag.

"Good. I'll go with the children to Berlin, and there we'll see if the professor won't heal the lad's head—for our money." He put the slip of paper into his pocket.

A few days later the great physician examined Jossele's head and prescribed a salve. The man with the slip of paper did not dismiss his little charges from his care. The names of his children were inscribed on his passport and that gave him a chance to smuggle Hannah Lea's offspring across the border as his own flesh and blood. Long before they reached the frontier, he began to coach them in their assumed roles.

"What is thy name?" he would suddenly turn upon Jossele. To which the lad made instant answer, every time:

"Samuel Goldman."

"Correct—thou wilt not forget?"

"Not I—Samuel Goldman."

"Good!" said his protector, well pleased.

"And thou—what art thou called?"

"Anna Goldman."

"Fine!" the man praised her, "you are both smart children!"

Nor did Jossele forget his new name at the crucial moment of crossing. Before the inquisition at the frontier he pointed to the stranger, claiming him expertly for a parent. It was the only time in Jossele's life when he

disowned his father—his conscience left him untroubled when necessity prompted.

Once safe across the frontier, at the parting of the roads, they took leave of their kindly protector and of a party of women who traveled in his direction. Benedictions were pronounced and once more, as on shipboard, the children were showered with gifts.

When the coach brought them into their native town to *Muhme* Sheindel, Jossele's heart beat thick and fast. On beholding them, the *Muhme* gave no signs of wonderment. Her cheeks were as hectic as ever, and a smile hovered around her bluish lips.

"Hi—hi—hi!" she tittered. "I knew it would turn out that way."

CHAPTER XIII

AS soon as the newcomers began to find their bearings on American soil—in the turning of a hand as it were—they were transformed into new human beings. Meir walked like a stranger in the midst of his own folk. Ever since the children began to go to school, their transformation went on, at a rapid pace, under his own astonished eyes. He could not keep count of these swift changes, but with every successive day he felt more and more that these were not his children—that they were strangers—that they actually began to overawe him.

He, Meir, the Talmud scholar, a man of worship in his own native town, was now put to shame by his own children just out of *chedar*. Fresh from the steamer and scarcely put to school, they began to speak English and to join in all kinds of sports with such a fervent zest and gusto as if they had been American natives instead of being born and

reared in the little Polish town of Leshna. They read the sporting sheets, they took a glowing partisan interest in the football-matches between 'varsities and townships, they looked upon their father as a "green-horn," a stranger to English speech and to American ways.

No stronger solvent of assimilation exists than the American public school. With every hour the children passed in school, they traveled farther and farther from Meir's ways of living and thinking. There awoke in them that independence which seems to be the birth-right of the American boy. As soon as they picked up a little English, they began to pick up a little-self-earned money as well. Come home from school, they went to the newspaper offices to traffic in papers, or else they would run errands and turn their hands to all kinds of odd jobs. And scarcely had they brought home to mother the first few pennies of their own thrift, they felt independent and responsible to no one in their personal concerns. In these children of a petty Polish townlet, smarting but yesterday under their father's autocratic rule, there awoke with elementary force, in an American setting, a yearning for

unshackled liberty. And in defense of this their newly-acquired liberty, they began to use their fists, like boys to the manner born. Their father's word was of little authority now with them—they said their prayers at their pleasure, came and went whenever they listed and concerned themselves very little about the law and ordinance of Jewish ritual. Meir was forthwith made to understand that America wasn't Leshna and that hereabouts his authority was at an end. When he chided them in Yiddish, the boys retorted in English: "Mind your own business!"

As for Hannah Lea, she cursed the bones of Columbus, though she hadn't the slightest inkling who Columbus was. She had listened to other Jewish housewives with a grievance against America, and as they heaped maledictions upon Columbus, so did she: "Alas, why did my husband bring me to America, to Columbus—may he find no rest in his grave!"

Not only the "bandits," but even little Rachel underwent a transformation after her return to America. (She came back with Yudel the tailor, after placing Jossele with *Muhme* Sheindel.) Rachel now went to the factory where she learned from her friends

to wear trimmed hats and to go to the theater. (Once she went the length of taking her mother with her, for a treat.) . . .

There, then, sat Hannah Lea and Meir with their hearts yearning for Jossele across the seas; their only one, they called him in their transports of longing.

Meantime, Jossele grew to be a big boy. Some two years had passed since he had gone out of his parents' sight. Some months ago he had begun with the study of the Talmud, and now he sat among the more advanced pupils, a scholar among scholars.

Neither Meir nor Hannah Lea rejoiced now in his recitals. Every Saturday afternoon his uncle examined him in the presence of Aunt Sheindel. And the *Muhme* tittered so weirdly during his feats of scholarship that it was impossible to say whether she grieved or rejoiced over them. Her face became more sallow-hued, her cheeks more hectic, her eyes greener with every passing day. All day long she sat in a corner sewing her winding sheets. "One must be prepared for the day of death," she said. "Everyone ought to make ready." She joined a burial society and whenever anyone in town died, she did service at the deathbed.

And thus Jossele knew of all the departed and their passing—what agonies they went through, what spasms gripped them, whether their faces were distorted or peaceful. And this was not all—he knew whose turn it was next. For the *Muhme* sat through entire winter-nights reckoning up the tales of mortality and the chances of those at death's door. Truly, when Jossele saw her walking the streets she seemed to him the Angel of Death closing in upon people unawares. . . . The uncle sat for days in utter silence. Not a word issued forth from his mouth, unless urgent necessity prompted—as if he were living in another world, descending to this only at meal-times. . . .

Great was the longing of father and son for each other. The ocean parted them—but there was an unbroken interchange of letters. Jossele made announcement to father of every new Talmud chapter he commenced and of every item of Bible Commentary he studied. Meir, on his part, advised him of all that happened beyond the water.

In his letters, Meir aired his grievance about his children. They only caused him heart-ache. They had ceased to be Jews, he

wrote to Jossele. In the morning they rise, gulp their breakfast and skip their prayers. All day long they stay in schools where only profane and secular subjects are taught them. They walk under the free heavens without a head-covering. They only speak a heathen tongue, having forgotten all Jewish speech. They pay no heed to the words of father and mother, for it is customary in America to hold one's parents in slight esteem. Even Rachel has changed for the worse—she wears now strange headgear and goes to the theater and the circus. Jossele was greatly put out about all this. What—not to mind father and mother? To omit one's morning prayers? To eat without saying grace? And in his consternation he wrote long letters to his brothers—letters scarcely read and never taken to heart—wherein he exhorted them to honor father and mother, illumining his text with ancient saws in praise of dutiful children.

CHAPTER XIV

WITH each month of their American growth the children grew farther estranged from Meir, whose helplessness could do nothing to keep them from drifting away from him. Their father's piety and ways of living became to them a matter of jest. They flatly refused to go with father to Sabbath service. Instead, they ran off, on Sabbath of all days, to football matches—to "the chase," as Hannah Lea called the game. In the evening, they usually came home, hatless, with faces scratched and torn clothing. There was no one now of sufficient authority to call them to order. Before Meir's eyes, they broke the laws of Judaism every day, times out of number, with no one to hinder or gainsay. Worse than this: they held their father in disrespect, put him down for a "crank," a "dope," a "greenhorn," spoke irreverently of his study of Sacred Writ, his scholarship, his Judaism. All this while he received from Jossele letters

overflowing with love of Judaism and Jewish learning. Jossele, it seemed, was his only true-born Jewish child and he longed for the lad with all his soul—longed for his sight, for speech with him who would still own him for a father. He would be a dutiful son to him, submit to his teaching, go with him to the House of Prayer. And thus he wrote urgent entreaties to Leibush, his brother-in-law, adjuring him, in the name of God, to speed the boy's return to America, after his recovery.

* * *

Shortly before the festival of *Purim*, the snow began to melt in the streets of Leshna. That was the time when Jossele's yearning for a sight of his parents reached its height. Oh, for a day, a single evening with them, a mere peep through the keyhole to see what father and mother are doing! In the evening, when his schoolmates joyfully scampered home, Jossele thought of his absent parents with a groan: "God in Heaven! How long am I to live in exile!" [Separated from his parents, he looked upon himself as one living "in banishment."] His heart found relief in prayers and tears. Suddenly, God aiding, he had an intuition. With his little hoard of savings

from father's remittances of pocket-money he went early the next morning to Samuel, the surgeon's apprentice, and bared the scar on his head that stood between him and America.

Samuel put a salve on the rash—and behold God's wonder-working power! What the great "Professor" in Berlin couldn't achieve with his treatment, the salve of Samuel effected without trouble—the rash disappeared like a blotch that is wiped away. Wonder of God! It was not for nothing that the sun had been blazing away in a cloudless sky as if in mid-summer. This alone, said Samuel, the surgeon's apprentice, was a sure token of Divine intercession, inasmuch as the salve could cure only at a season of sunshine. As for Jossele, he never dreamt of doubting that a miracle had been vouchsafed from on High, in response to his humble supplications.

With his little head now freed from all blemish, he wrote to his father and his father wrote once more to Leibush, entreating him to do God's holy will as clearly betokened by this cure, and to make all haste in dispatching the lad to his parents. It so befell, just at this time, that Yudel, the tailor, had called his family to America, and Leibush managed to

have Jossele travel with them. On the last day of his stay in Leshna, his teacher argued with him a particularly intricate point of Talmudic exegesis, true to the precept that required two scholars in the hour of parting to discuss a matter of learning.

To Jossele, an experienced traveler now, his third passage across the ocean was a matter of little account. Neither the waters below nor the gentlemen of the Immigration Commission on board had any terrors for him in his newborn conviction that Heaven had decreed his reunion with his parents at the end of his voyage. He lifted his cap quietly, showed a little scholar's skull now free from disfigurement, and the gentlemen let him pass. Within the hour, surrounded on deck by his admiring townsmen, he told the story of his miraculous cure to father and mother, to his brothers and little Rachel, to all who had come to the harbor to see him safely home. And the rejoicing of his parents was exceeding all measure.

At first Jossele could hardly recognize his own brothers. During a brief term of separation they had changed past recognition almost—they frightened him. These ruddy-cheeked boys looking like yokels—were these his

brothers Berel and Chaim? All day long they walked about with uncovered heads, wore short coats and spoke a language Jossele didn't understand. They didn't hold their father in awe, ate without saying grace and without ritual hand-washing. And Rachel, too—Rachel was attired like a grand lady, and seldom at home. Her mother suffered it without protest—she had nothing to say to Chaim's and Berel's graceless ways. On Sabbath day the boys went a-sporting—they went the length of kindling bonfires on the day of rest. Nay more: even father was affected by the change. He wore a short coat, stayed from home all day long, and at the family-board he read a newspaper in the evening. Truly, a world turned upside down! Two weeks had passed since Jossele's landing, but no one saw fit to bring him to *Chedar*. On the contrary, he was to go to public school, his parents said, where Chaim and Berel had received their schooling. There he would have to sit, with uncovered head, to learn whatever it was that his brothers had been learning before him. Pending this, he stayed at home with mother—he was afraid to roam the streets with his brothers, and never listened to their urgent

solicitations. The uproar of the streets penetrated to Hannah Lea's narrow room and frightened him out of his wits.

And thus he stayed within doors, incapable of finding his bearings. Everything carried to him the chill of strangeness: the room, his brothers, his very mother dressed in outlandish garments. The boy was dazed and puzzled by the topsy-turvydom all around him. Once he took a Talmud folio from the bookshelves and recapitulated the last chapter he had studied in familiar surroundings. His mother watched him out of the corner of her tear-dimmed eye. But presently his brothers took the room by storm, jeered at him, tore him from his Talmud! A wave of confused noises flooded the room through the open door and the windows: carts and wagons creaked and rumbled—human voices were raised in angry dispute, a barrel-organ began to play—how, then, could a little boy center his mind upon the sacred texts? On the street children began to gather around the barrel-organ—they were dancing. Others played ball or jumped a skipping-rope, and all were merry and noisy. His brothers tease him to join the games, they hustle him and and drag him out of the room,

but in his fear of strange children and their ways he tears himself away from the noisy pair and creeps into a corner. Hannah Lea herself takes him by the hand—she leads him downstairs, importunes him to join the children in their play: “go, Jossele, go and join the game!” But Jossele, shy and bewildered, sticks close to his mother’s skirts—he returns to the room and to his Talmud.

At times a tearful nostalgia, a hankering after “home,” took hold of the little fellow—though he knew, of course, that there was no “home” for him any more in Leshna. But there was no home for him on this side of the water either—the “home” he had in his mind’s eye was a place that had passed beyond recall—a snugger where his father would study Talmud of an evening, where Jossele, sitting near him, would peacefully fall a-dozing over his parent’s droning recitation, where mother used to wash and dress him and then to light candles as white as the Sabbath-peace to come. . . .

At fitful intervals, a semblance of such a home re-appeared, when father would stay at home in the evening, studying together a chapter of the Talmud. When father and son re-

cited the texts in the age-old traditional sing-song, Jossele felt as if in the home of olden times. In such moments, both father and son saw a vision of their home rebuilt—they were drawn to each other, heart and soul, studying the wisdom of their race at night, in this big and terrifying alien city of New York.

The time came when Jossele, in compliance with the law, had to be sent to public school. Reluctantly and with many misgivings, his mother went with him, with Berel to show the way.

They stood in front of a huge building. Its vastness was in itself enough to chill and terrify little Jossele. But when he saw Berel speaking to everybody he met within, undaunted and unabashed as if at home, his drooping spirits picked up a little. Berel took them to the office, where Jossele was duly entered upon the records as a new pupil. (A hard time his mother had of it persuading him to doff his little hat—and when at last he did it, he covered his head with both hands.) He looked in wonderment at Berel, who spoke without fear to the registry clerk in the gentleman's own tongue. Berel took his brother boldly by the hand and led him off to the class-room,

but Jossele balked and trembled at the threshold in an agony of fear. "Come with me, mother!" he prayed.

"Go, my child, and have no fear! Thou seest thy brother Berel at thy side, unhurt and at home in this place."

When he was finally persuaded to enter the class-room, he stood rooted to the floor in his astonishment. Never before had he seen a room so big and lofty—why, it was bigger than a synagogue! And such a multitude of children seated on chairs! He was led to a seat and took it, mooning. A dense gathering of ladies and gentlemen stood on the platform. An organ played, fluting and thundering by turns, with a voice so sweet and powerful as to bring tears to little Jossele's eyes. Since the destruction of the Holy Temple, the consolation of such music was not for Jewish ears. And Jossele, mindful of the Holy Temple, felt guilty in sitting there, bareheaded, an eager listener to prohibited strains. The children sang a song to the accompaniment of the organ, in a tongue he did not understand.

Both song and music ceased, and the children noisily dispersed. Jossele stood aghast when he saw Berel approaching one of the

ladies and freely speaking to her, jesting and laughing without a trace of fear. The lady took Jossele by the hand, with a friendly smile on her face, uttering words of welcome whereof he understood the drift and purport, if not the words, by their sweet and pleasant intonation. Abashed beyond measure, the boy bowed his head and closed his eyes. But the lady lifted his chin, smiled at him another loving welcome, and stroked his little head. He blushed a fiery red—never before in his life had he been caressed by any women save his mother only. His bewildered eyes made roving search for Berel, but Berel had disappeared.

“Miss Isabel,” the teacher that had taken him in hand, was herself the daughter of Russian-Jewish parents. She could not remember the home of her early childhood, but her native sentiment took the form of an exquisitely tender concern in little immigrant children freshly arrived from Russia. Out of their fears and timidities she reconstructed life in the Russian Ghetto in all its bitterness. Her heart went out in pity to these shy little folks. Herself an immigrant child, she tried her hardest to put the little newcomers at ease. Jossele had made an instant conquest of her.

His scared eyes, his bowed head and trembling little body were to her a perfect symbol of the greyness, the forlornness of Russian-Jewish childhood. Of this forlornness every new pupil that came to her from her old home, brought a message more or less distinct.

All of a sudden she spoke to him in Yiddish: "Have no fear!" The lad looked up to her in his surprise, saw her heart in her eyes, and became her worshipper forevermore. But his quickly-won affection had no words just then—he went silently through his first day in school.

* * *

On reaching home, Jossele crouched in a corner. He neither ate nor spoke, nor did he shed any tears. He sat in his corner, pensive and motionless, wrapped up within himself. The sun shone brightly and the merry noise of children rose from the pavement. An organ-grinder presently came along and there was music and the pattering of many little feet, all audible in Hannah Lea's room. Again the mother took her child by the hand to lead him out-of-doors and make him join in the romping and dancing. But Jossele would not have it so; he returned to his corner, keeping obsti-

nately silent. When father came home in the evening, Jossele took a Talmud folio from the shelf after supper and father and son began to read aloud. Suddenly, in the midst of his sing-song recitation, the boy broke down, sobbing, with Hannah Lea following suit. Meir rose frowning from his chair, paced the room with rapid steps and tugged his beard. None asked the other for the cause of this sudden agitation—they all knew. Father, mother and child were mourning a home that had been and was no more.

CHAPTER XV

SULTRY summer days in the middle of April are of frequent occurrence in New York City. On such a day a hot, moist wind blew landward from the sea. Under its breath the city air grew warm and hazy. The windows of the tenements flew open, one by one. Dark crowds that had huddled together for warmth in rooms hermetically sealed up against the winter-cold, poured forth now in human torrents upon the pavement. A hundred items of winter use—clothing, undergarments, pillows and feather-beds, were spread now for an airing upon fire-escapes and window-sills, a stuffy mass of unsightliness on plain exhibition throughout the quarters of the poor. The front-porches became dwelling places, the very rooms themselves seemed to have been turned out-of-doors. Entire families beleaguered the house-fronts, conspicuous among them matrons with babies at their grossly bared breasts,

facing the passers-by with the unashamed hardihood of local usage. A flurry of bed-feathers came whirling from above and the air was miasmatic with a mixture of strange malodors. High overhead gloomed the structure of the elevated railroad. Its trains passed every other minute, rumbling from afar, thundering nearer and nearer, leaving behind them a long trail of oscillating, evil-flavored air.

Into this pandemonium of unseemly sights and discordant sounds broke suddenly the music of a fife-and-drum corps with a shrill rendering of a national song. Behind the musicians marched groups of children, a multicolored masquerade merrily keeping step with the tune—a “May-Walk” of little Jossele’s class bound for Central Park. Miss Isabel, leading Jossele by the hand, marched in front. The boy, in his garb of make-believe, was changed past all ken. He was supposed to be the torchbearer of the “royal pair” strutting behind him under a star-spangled canopy of blue. In right of his office, the little link-boy of royalty wore a white blouse and a paper-cap, fantastically feathered. In his hand he carried the socket of a torch. His

footsteps were leaden and his carriage bent—he felt ill at ease in his fancy dress and resentful at being made a party to this foolish piece of mummary. His schoolmates played their several parts in the pageant with the greatest gusto. An Italian boy marched behind the king and queen in the stage-attire of a field-marshal, with a retinue of pages, officers, soldiers and servitors. All the children were rejoicing. The boys kept step like soldiers, the girls scattered flowers on the road, with many pretty curtseys and genuflexions before the royal couple. Only Jossele turned a deaf ear to fife and drum and to the laughter of the children. In the midst of the merry brood he walked like an oldster bowed under the burden of life-long tribulations. He, the Talmud scholar, felt it an intolerable degradation to walk the streets in broad noon-day, with his face painted and with a foolscap for a head-covering. As he walked, the “aim-and-goal” demand of Hebrew religious discourse kept on buzzing through his brains. Over yonder, in Leshna, his erstwhile comrades are now sitting at the feet of their teacher. They have left him way behind in the study of the Talmud—and he—he is inextricably mixed

up now in the vain follies of this world! To what end? Father stays away all day long at his work, in the evening he falls asleep with weariness, and his brothers—alas, they have ceased to be Jews. And he himself—how many times had he to resist the Tempter! He was guiltily conscious of being lax now at praying—of omitting long passages—of passing whole days without any Hebrew on his lips—of forgetting, forgetting. . . .

In vain did Miss Isabel try, time and again, to cheer him. Her loving smile, her pleasure in the pleasuring of her little wards, her short skirt and loose-flowing hair made her look a child among children. But hard as she tried, she could not make Jossele enter into the spirit of the game. All her friendly urgencies only made him bow his head deeper and deeper in shame and dismay. . . .

In the most beautiful part of Central Park the march came to a halt. Dispersed over the softly undulating meadows, the children in their gay costumes looked like tulips raising their multi-colored calices above the green. The pupils of several public-schools, all gone a-maying, mingled in play. The teachers—pretty young women, one and all—arranged a

number of games in which they themselves took part. Miss Isabel romped with her little girls, her tresses flowing in the breeze. In the midst of her romping she noticed Jossele sitting apart under a tree, an indifferent onlooker, with something like an ironical smile hovering about his bloodless lips. She sat down in the grass, close to the little lad, and began to talk to him.

Three weeks of American schooling had made Jossele familiar with the pitch and rhythm of the English tongue—without distinctly knowing the meaning of most words; he listened and understood. He found no difficulty in understanding the English of Miss Isabel. Her eyes, her gentle smile were aids to a ready comprehension. With bowed head and cheeks reddened with embarrassment, he listened. She loved the child and her pity for his forlornness was a steady flame within her. In making up to him, she felt as if she were paying a sort of debt to her own people in far-off Russia. Over there, in far-off Russia, she had left her father behind her. She was an infant at the breast, when her mother divorced her father, married another man, and emigrated with him to America. Of

her father she had no tidings ever since. A strange conceit took her captive: in the sal- low face of little Jossele, in his hollow, mournful eyes, she saw the imagined features of an unknown father, left behind in far-off Russia. The longer she looked into his wan and sallow little face, the stronger did this fancy take hold of her. Was her father really cast in the likeness of this child? Did he have the same sluggish blood, the same gloom- ing eyes? . . . What was it Jossele was pondering deeply? The workings of his mind were to her a fascinating puzzle. What troubles does he meditate in his little head— above all, why is he always and forever wrap- ped in gloom? Again her thoughts reverted to her father. He is wandering perchance, at this very hour, with the same glooming eyes, somewhere through the Russian steppes, his bundle on his shoulder, or tramping, maybe, the endless highroads of the great Russian Empire. Assuredly, all Jews there walk sad- eyed and with bowed heads in the heaviness of their spirits. . . .

“Where didst thou have that sore?” (Berel had told her of Jossele’s tragic return.)

The boy pointed to the scar now healed and

she looked at the spot in fascination, as if it were emblematic of Jewish sufferings.

"And was this the cause of thy deportation?"

"Yes," replied Jossele in Yiddish.

"And how didst thou fare on thy way homeward?" She spoke in Yiddish and English by turns.

"Good people had compassion with me—they saw me safely home."

A picture flashed through her brains of a one-year old girl-child in her mother's arms, a sore disfiguring her baby-head, mother and child turned back in sight of the American haven—a retrospective possibility that made her wince in self-pity. In her paroxysm of sympathetic pain she took the boy to her arms, covered him with kisses, and as her hot tears fell on his face, she sobbed:

"Poor, poor Jewish child!"

When Jossele returned home, the street he lived in was brightly alight and swarming with human life. All the children were out of doors, all the families perched on the front-steps. The pushcart-owners made ready to light their torches, and the streets, owned during the day by women and children, began to fill with men and half-grown lads. At

first they arrived singly or in little groups, but presently they poured in in hordes. The elevated railroad thundering overhead fed another batch of arrivals into this dark mass every other minute, until the streets, viewed from on high, seemed covered with thick swarms of locusts. These were the workers of the city, come home from their offices and sweat-shops. The shopkeepers now lighted torches, affixed to the stalls in front of their little dens. Their voices rose in a clamorous hub-bub, calling upon the crowd to buy their ware. With the approach of night the streets became livelier and noisier every hour. It seemed as if the dwellers therein had slept all through the day and were now beginning to be astir. To heighten this semblance of topsy-turvydom, they bought the morning papers from hustling newsboys at late evening hours. The restaurants and barrooms filled with crowds, mostly young men. The later the hour, the stronger the pulse-beat of life on the pavements, illumined by the garish light of the film-shows and cheap theatres abounding in this neighborhood. The windows of the dwellings are dark, but the streets are flooded with light, noisy with traffic, hum-

ming with chatter, resonant with music and singing. And every other minute the trains overhead, wild beasts with flaming eyes, out-roared the noise and commotion of the pavements below.

Little Jossele sat upon the front-porch and looked upon a world wherein he had no part. His mother had dragged him forcibly from out of his corner in a sweltering room into the open air. His father, stripped to shirt and trousers, lay near him in a chair snoring, paralyzed with weariness after his day's work. Mother, too, drowsed off on the stoop, despite the noise and clamor of the street. Chaim and Berel were on the rampage, somewhere on the streets. Little Jossele sat there, disconsolate, his soul divorced from his surroundings. He paid no heed to the noises of night turned into day, his eyes were blind to the flood of light from above and below—they were peering into the corners of a little street in Leshna as it might be under the peace of a summer night. From synagogue windows is wafted the singsong-chant of Talmud students, the moon only illumines the street and the cemetery nearby, and father and mother . . . he awoke out of his day-

dream with a start—he looked at his parents and all at once felt unspeakably lonesome, a derelict of the town. This was not the father for whom his heart had been sore a-hungered in Leshna. He only saw a weary and taciturn workman, coming home from his labor exhausted, morose and sleepy. Not a word of “Torah” was on his lips these days. He scarcely took time to say his morning prayers. And mother—she, too, had altered for the worse—everything—everything was changed. As he gloomed, Hannah Lea stirred in her sleep, murmuring: “Go, Jossele, my child—go and play!” Suddenly the boy felt a stabbing pain in his head. The street began to reel, his eyes began to swim, his vision turned dim and uncertain. He leaned back against the steps, an infinite lassitude overcame him. His thoughts groped forlornly in the dark. In the dark he found his way back to Leshna—the town veiled in a haze. He was in school, before his old teacher. Somebody recited Talmud passages. His father’s voice penetrated through the haze, sweet and sad, singing a threnody of the Holy Temple destroyed—there were swift changes in the boy’s mental vision of darkness and

light . . . then, abruptly, came a darkness, opaque and impenetrable. . . .

Jossele's weary little body lay on the stoop, like a piece of litter on the curb, like an outworn garment thrown to the winds. The torches burned brightly, the electric lights glowed white, the train thundered overhead. A hot moisture came from the sea landward, the walls of stone and brick exuded the heat they had absorbed during the day, and a heavy lassitude, harbinger of sickness and death, was in the air.

CHAPTER XVI

ON the edge of the boy's bed of suffering sat Miss Isabel, holding his tiny hand in hers, looking steadfastly into his eyes. Jossele's face was flushed, his dark eyes a-glitter with fever. A pathetic smile, familiar by this time to Miss Isabel, hovered about his lips. His neck, deadly white and meager, stood out from his bony shoulders, his chest labored heavily in breathing. From time to time Miss Isabel put upon his burning head the lumps of ice handed her by Hannah Lea on a platter. Hannah Lea had ceased weeping. Her visible exhaustion had dried up in her the very fountain whence her tears used to spring so freely.

Meir paced the room with troubled steps, rough-handled his beard, bit his lips, with now and then a groan he couldn't suppress. When the boy called out to him, he went to his bed and eyed him in silence. The room was still, sultry, and dark. The light in a little oil-lamp had been turned down to the merest pinpoint

of a flame to keep the air untainted, but the atmosphere was hot and lifeless for all that, and its withering influence came near prostrating the entire family. Little Rachel and the "bandits" sprawled on the floor in half a swoon, trying to cool their flushed faces by pressing them against the ground. They were lying motionless as if asleep, but all were drowsily awake, drawing breath with difficulty in an atmosphere that seemed to be afire.

For it was one of those New York summer nights when the air seems to be simmering like a pot a-boiling. All limbs relax, all living beings turn faint, all men and women seem to lose the very power of exertion, however brief. Such nights carry a sinister suggestion that New York, heat-slain, won't awaken to rise in the morning.

Ever since the first onslaught of the heat-wave Jossele was ailing. His sufferings passed unnoticed for three weeks, until high fever set in and the boy had to be put to bed. The fever in his veins was matched by his mute heart-burnings after the old Jewish life he had left behind him. Hollowed-eyed, he looked at his own people, a stranger among strangers.

Miss Isabel was the only human being whose

friendly advances he didn't repel. He crouched and cowered, he took neither nourishment nor medicine, his little body shrank to infantile proportions. He had never been sturdy, and his sufferings, physical and mental, paved the way now for the inroads of the heat. At last, he withdrew completely within himself, submitting passively even to the approaches of Miss Isabel, removed in the spirit beyond this world and the dwellers therein. His fleshless body, his delirious eyes, his motionless limbs and speechless lips were so many melancholy tokens of renunciation—outworn garments of his soul to be forthwith discarded without struggle or protest. . . .

The room was plainly unfit to live in. His mother lifted his pathetically thin and shrunk-en body in her arms and carried him out-of-doors. Miss Isabel took leave of Hannah Lea, She bent over the sufferer, but he looked at her with unseeing eyes.

There was little solace waiting out-doors for mother or child. The air, breezeless and stifling, pressed upon the people of the pavements with the enervating insistence of an inescapable embrace. Entire families seemed heat-struck in their torpid lumping on the

front-stoops. The children slept prostrate on the pavements, if their semi-stupor could be called sleep. Their mothers bathed their foreheads with grimy little lumps of ice.

In her frantic search for a whiff of life-giving air, Hannah Lea sat down with her burden in the middle of the roadway. Jossele didn't stir. His body was visibly in the throes of dissolution—but to what unknown regions had he carried his silent soul?

Behold: he walks a white and luminous road, as white and as luminous as the star-spangled heavens on a cloudless night—and with him are walking in multitudinous procession an endless number of Jews. Jews are assembled here from every quarter of the globe—the quick and the dead risen from their graves—generations of Jews past all counting—for the Messiah has come, amidst a resurrection of the dead. There he stands, above the people, wrapped in a big prayer-shawl, and around him are grouped all the patriarchs and prophets of the old dispensation, all saints and scholars that ever walked the earth, among them the Rabbi of Leshna—gone to his reward but the other day, but plainly visible now to Jossele as he walked in the flesh. A funeral procession keeps step

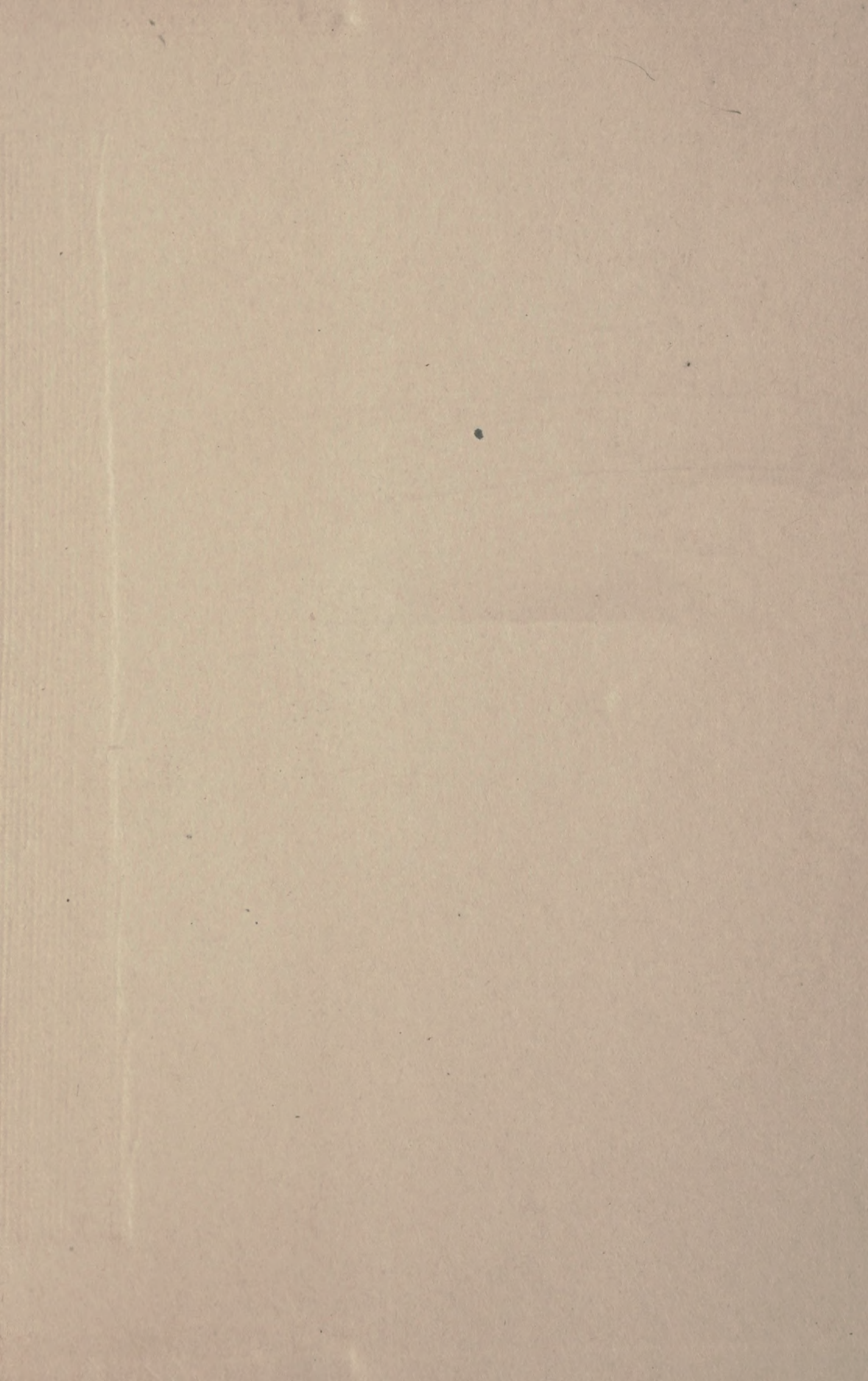
before the Messiah—a saint belike, a great one in Israel must have died—he is carried now to his resting place, lifted high above the heads of the community assembled in his honor. But wonder of wonders—the mourners in his train seem to be jubilating over his release from earthly tribulations! Levites are striking harp-chords, flutes mingle in the strain, choirs of devotees—all eager for the honor to lend a hand as pall-bearers. Archmother Rachel walks behind the great departed one, in statuesque beauty, her head towering high above the heads of a community giving way to her in profoundest reverence. Behind her, behold the patriarchs, ancients with magnificent white beards, and in their wake Moses and his brother Aaron, both of giant build and awe-inspiring carriage. Follows King David, royally alone, harp in hand, a youth of graceful mien. Behind him the other Kings of Israel, in the order of their succession, with the prophets in their train all clad in white; the just and the pious of all generations, and finally Kol Yisroel—all Jews that ever lived. The path they walk is luminous and bright—it leads to a heaven visible and beckoning in the prospect—a heaven radiant like an ocean of color and

light—a vision well nigh unbearable to human eyes in its splendor. Angels are seen in their halo, drawn up to the right and left to receive the approaching funeral procession. More angels—farther vistas—more unearthly splendors—little Jossele has a sudden intuition: it is he whose body they are carrying in triumph! Light, unearthly, undying, inconceivably brilliant light—the Messiah has reached the heavens! A blinding ocean of luminous rays encompasses little Jossele—triumphant Hosannahs—then stillness and everlasting darkness he expired suddenly without a struggle in the arms of Hannah Lea. . . .

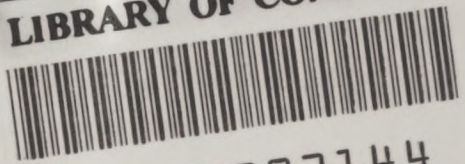
* * *

When Hannah Lea returned from Jossele's funeral, the same feeling that had beset her upon leaving the graves of her children in the cemetery of Leshna now gripped her with irresistible force. Her only thought was: How can I leave this country, with my little one holding me to the soil he sleeps in?

And she knows that she is chained henceforward to this alien and unfriendly soil until the end, incapable of leaving the spot that hides her treasure underneath.



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